Hafa Adai!
Merry Christmas!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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'OPM OK'd conversion of some Tinian employees' **PAGE 6**
DCCA report: 22 vital posts need to be filled. **PAGE 13**

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, how safe do you feel in the security of your own home these days?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Balloon Hoax
The parents who pulled the balloon boy hoax in hopes of landing a reality TV show are sentenced to jail.

NATION...Page 20

Ferry Collision
At least 27 people are missing after a passenger ferry collided with a fishing boat in Manila Bay.

ASIA...Page 21

'Sewage failures accelerating'

Inos extends CUC emergency declaration anew

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Sewage collection piping failed for the sixth time in six months on Dec. 18, and the wastewater failures are continuing at an accelerated rate. Because of the sewage failures, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s Wastewater Division has already far exceeded its repair budget.

Inos

These are among the new items contained in acting Gov. Eloy S. Inos's latest extension of declaration of a state of disaster emergency for CUC.

See SEWAGE on Page 4

Last-minute Christmas shoppers crowd stores

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
Jocelyn Deleon Guerrero, left, reaches out for a Santa Claus hat, while 6-year-old Hannah Chan tries on one of them at the Joeten Susupe Shopping Center for a Christmas Eve shopping yesterday afternoon. Last-minute holiday shoppers crowded major Saipan retail stores yesterday, bringing relief to retailers in these tough economic times.

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Amy Chan, 44, shortened her list of things to buy because of at least 50 percent cut in her Christmas shopping budget this year. But she's happy to be able to still give gifts to her children and loved ones even with the limited budget.

"Now I'm only buying things my kids really need," Chan told *Saipan Tribune* in an interview while she was shopping at the

See CHRISTMAS on Page 4

Been away from the airport? A lot has changed

By JOSHUA FREED
AP BUSINESS WRITER

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Haven't flown since last Christmas? Be prepared. Things have changed.

Airlines continued to adjust to the tough economy. There are even fewer planes in service, and that can make rebooking after a cancellation tougher. Higher bag fees and new charges can make flying more expensive. And swine flu worries mean you might get a wary look from the adja-

See AIRPORT on Page 4

A British Airways plane comes in to land at Heathrow Airport in London, Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2009.
AP

NMC Foundation to adopt resolution supporting Fernandez

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Officials of the Northern Marianas College Foundation closed ranks Wednesday to express support and confidence in beleaguered Dr. Carmen Fernandez, who has been criticized for her management style on campus.

Saipan Tribune learned that the foundation's board of directors met on Dec. 23, during which members unanimously voted to adopt a resolution that would express confidence and support for the college's chief executive.

Directors present in Wednesday's meeting included Foundation president Ben Babauta, members Jerry Tan, Ivan Quichocho, Yoichi Matsumura, and Jack

See NMC on Page 4

Local

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WISH LIST THIS CHRISTMAS

"My Christmas wish list is for a green card (which just came true!), to earn my degree, and to travel around the world."
—**Aleth Kae Atalig**, *Northern Marianas College student*

"I would like to wish for a better CNMI economy for all. And that my kids stay healthy and do well in school. For myself, a new set of Taylor Made golf clubs!"
—**Jay Santos**, *Human Resource director, Triple J Motors*

"My Christmas wish is for peace, prosperity, and happiness for the people of the CNMI."
—CNMI Delegate **Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan** (D-MP)

"I wish Santa would give me a Barbie Townhouse as a gift for this Christmas. But if not, I'll settle for whatever toy he will give me this Christmas."
—**Maxine Rabago**, *Grade 1, Eucon International School and College*

Continued on Next Page

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goes down memory lane with the
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DRINK ALL YOU CAN...
$20.00/person
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DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS @ 12mn
and continue partying @
w/ TENDERLOIN DISTRICT
B2B w/ DJ BIG KEN
after the countdown till 4am
CLUB V

"My birthday and Christmas wishes include the safe delivery of a healthy baby and good health for my family."

—Franni Pineda, *accountant, Joeten Enterprises*

"I wish all my loved ones in the Philippines and all my friends here to enjoy life to the fullest and be in good health this holiday season and beyond."

—Marlon Estigoy, *accountant, Hafadai Beach Hotel*

"My Christmas wish is for God's blessing to our leaders and people that we work together for the CNMI's prosperity. A BIG *Si Yuus Maase* and *Ghilisoow* to our sons and daughters in the armed forces who are bringing peace to the world, that we all find joy and happiness in our family, friends, and neighbors."

—Clyde Norita, *vice chair, Transition Committee*

"I wish there will be more tournaments in 2010 and more businesses/individuals will help in the tennis community's tournaments. I also hope to have more students in my tennis lessons."

—Peter Loyola, *Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan tennis instructor*

Continued on Page 5

"My biggest wish is for my brother to come home from the U.S. Navy this Christmas."

—Camille Orallo, *Gualo Rai*

"I am wishing for a BFC, Ink. doll this Christmas. If it's not too much I would also like to have a Nintendo DS."

—Bianca Cielo, *Grade 3, San Vicente Elementary School*

"I wish all my family members who are serving in the U.S. Army and Marines would come home for the holidays."

—Dwayne K. Davis, *Dandan*

"Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year! I thank the Lord for giving us our wonderful and lovely child, Lee-Ann. We're also thankful to all our friends and families who support us all throughout the years."

—Ric Brien, *graphic artist, University of Loyola*

Happy Holidays To You
& Your Family...
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Guam gets EMS grant for children

Guam Gov. Felix P. Camacho was recently notified that the government of Guam received a grant award in the amount of $10,300 from the U.S. Department of the Interior. According to a letter from Anthony M. Babauta, Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs, the funding will used by the Department of Public Health and Social Services to purchase necessary age-appropriate medical and rescue equipment for Guam Fire Department ambulances.

"The funding will go toward adequately supplying our ambulances with the equipment to properly transport and care for our island's children during emergencies," said Camacho. "I commend the employees of DPHSS and GFD for identifying and securing the funding for this equipment and for their continued commitment to better serve our community."

The funds will be used by DPHSS's Emergency Medical Services for Children program to purchase the following: Pedi-Air-Align Complete System; Pediatric Immobilizer and Transport System; Philly One Piece Extrication Collars–Infant and Pediatric; and Prosplints Complete Child Splint Kit. ***(PR)***

NMC

From Page 1

Kiyoshi, who represents the NMC Alumni Association.

Babauta cited Fernandez's role in getting back the accreditation of the college after being placed on show-cause status by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

"We wanted to congratulate her on the successful visit by the accreditation team, who came to campus last October. At the same time, all the members of the Foundation want to express their support of the president during this time," Babauta said in a statement.

Fernandez has been the subject of criticisms, both within the campus and in the community, for the large number of employees who were recently let go, mostly without any reasons cited. Among them are long-time employees Mark Haag, Glenn Keaton, and Sam McPhetres.

Fernandez assumed the presidency in 2007, when NMC was on the brink of losing its accreditation with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Her successful effort to retain NMC's accreditation resulted in her contract being renewed and even extended in May from two year to four years.

The NMC Foundation president said they are satisfied with Fernandez's performance in leading the college.

While acknowledging the concerns raised by NMC faculty over her leadership, the Foundation cited the president's efforts to address these concerns.

"We are satisfied with her performance and support her efforts to resolve issues with the faculty in a manner that is beneficial to all parties, especially to the students," Babauta said.

Despite the negative press coverage of the college, he said the Foundation believes that there are many more positive developments that are not publicized.

Babauta encouraged Fernandez to share with the public the many positive things happening on campus.

"We encouraged President Fernandez to ensure that these positive news stories and other great activities are also shared with the community," said Babauta.

The NMC Foundation is a non-profit organization that raises funds to support NMC, the CNMI's lone post-secondary educational institution.

It is composed of individuals who are dedicated and committed to ensuring that CNMI students receive the utmost support in pursuing their educational goals.

In the same meeting, Foundation officials presented scholarships to six full-time NMC students.

On Dec. 18, 80 percent of members of the NMC Faculty Assembly meeting gave a vote of "no confidence" against Fernandez.

AIRPORT

From Page 1

cent seat if you cough.

That can make this holiday season's travel experience more trying—and costly—although technology offers some ways to avoid the hassle.

The number of air travelers is expected to fall 2.5 percent to 41 million between Dec. 17 and Jan. 6, according to the Air Transport Association. Airlines have shrunk their schedules because of less passenger traffic.

"People are looking at $600, $700 fares for Christmas, and they're just not going, or they're driving," said George Hobica, who runs airfarewatchdog.com.

Bryan Saltzburg of TripAdvisor.com said infrequent fliers might be surprised by the hassle—as well as the expense—of checking a lot of bags at the airport. If you check two bags on most major airlines, you'll pay a fee of $15 or more for the first bag and $25 or more for the second. Several airlines now charge more to check bags at the airport than online.

Technology can give you a head start before you get to the airport. Hobica believes more people are using electronic devices to plan their flights, although what's available varies by airline. He recently changed a JetBlue flight from a mobile device and "was amazed at how easy it was."

Some airlines, including Delta, Continental, JetBlue and United, have started using social networking sites like Twitter to pass on information about weather.

Technology can also rescue you from standing in line. United Airlines is rolling out a "linebuster" service where agents with portable computers help late-arriving passengers make a connecting flight. Agents will check lines to see if travelers have already been rebooked—which is often the case—and send them to their new gate, where they get a new boarding pass, said United spokesman Rahsaan Johnson. The service is being tested in Chicago, Washington and Denver. Next month it expands to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

And then there are airport kiosks, those computers that the airlines would rather you deal with instead of an agent. Some airlines use the kiosks to sell you additional services like seat selection. Pay attention to each screen.

You should also program your airline's phone number into your cell phone. If you need to change flights, there's a decent chance you'll get faster results by phone than by standing in line for an agent, Saltzburg said. That could be especially important for travelers headed into winter storms. You can also give your mobile number to the airline in case your flight changes.

Once on the plane, travelers are more likely to find Internet access. Delta Air Lines says it has Wi-Fi on about half its fleet. You can get Internet access on roughly 40 percent of American Airlines' domestic planes. AirTran has Internet access on its whole fleet. Rates generally run from about $6 for handheld devices to $13 for a laptop.

Still no Wi-Fi on Continental Airlines, JetBlue Airways, Southwest Airlines, or US Airways.

There's one new concern not of the airlines' making: swine flu. Travelers might worry when they hear coughing from the seat next to or behind them.

All major U.S. airlines can deny boarding if they suspect you have swine flu. So what if you are sick? Delta and United will waive change fees if you're too ill to fly. Travelers on American will have to pay a change fee if they bought a nonrefundable ticket. Southwest doesn't charge change fees for any reason.

Several major airlines have removed pillows and blankets from flights, in part due to swine flu concerns. JetBlue, US Airways and Virgin America sell individual pillows. Airlines including American have supplied planes with extra medical kits containing masks, gloves, hand sanitizer wipes and thermometer strips.

CHRISTMAS

From Page 1

Joeten Shopping Center in Susupe.

Chan was among the thousands of people who crowded Saipan stores yesterday for last-minute Christmas shopping.

From Garapan to Susupe, grocery stores, shoe stores, toy stores and other retailers were teeming with shoppers who waited until the last minute to buy gifts and food items for Christmas, mostly because of discounted prices and lack of time to shop early.

A mother who was shopping for clothes with her three daughters aged 7 to 12 said she wouldn't have been able to avail of the discounted prices had she bought gifts earlier.

Adults and children crowded the shopping floor, with carts of consumer goods in tow.

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), upon seeing the filled to capacity parking lots at the Joeten Susupe Shopping Center, had to ask: "Who says people don't have money?"

Flat sales

Roman "Bo" Palacios, Joeten Enterprises corporate project manager, said the last three days before Christmas are usually the busiest holiday shopping period.

"Everyone seems to be doing their last-minute shopping. We've seen flat sales this year. We had the same sales as last year, but at least we're not in the red. We have good days and bad days, and this is one of the best days," Palacios said.

Joeten is the largest local retailer in the CNMI, with several stores on Saipan.

"Christmas happens only once a year so people take the time to buy presents. I'm sure it hurts people financially to do shopping these days but it's a time for giving; they'll pay for it later," he added.

As expected during the holidays, toys, apparel and shoes are always the top sellers.

"We've also seen surge in sales in seasonal items like the Japanese tangerine. Turkey is also a big-ticket item," he added.

Palacios said one of the signs that the times are really hard is the amount of left-over Christmas trees—about a dozen of them—that were still on display.

"But we put on our Christmas spirits every day. We put on our smiles and make customers feel welcome every single day," he added.

Palacios, who is also the general manager for Athlete's Foot, said they saw a "single-digit" uptick in shoe sales.

The parking lots and shopping areas of some of the major supermarkets and retail stores on Saipan were teeming with customers yesterday afternoon.

They included San Jose Mart and Dolphin Wholesale in Susupe; H-Mart and XO Market on Middle Road in Chalan Laulau; 99 Cents, Joeten Garapan Shopping Center and Lollipops in Garapan.

The CNMI has seen steep declines in business gross revenue for years. The latest quarterly business gross revenue figures available—between April and June 2009—saw a $28.4 million drop in the second quarter of calendar year 2009 compared to the same period last year.

Business gross revenue or the total sales of registered businesses in the CNMI reached only $395.72 million in April to June 2009, a 6-percent decrease from $423.96 million in the same quarter in 2008.

This also marked a 3-percent or $15.76 million drop in business gross revenue from the previous quarter of January to March.

Other economic indicators, including tourist arrivals, bank deposits and loans, remittances, vehicle sales, hotel occupancy, imports, exports and value of construction, also posted declines in the second quarter, based on the Department of Commerce's latest Economic Indicators Report.

SEWAGE

From Page 1

CUC's emergency declaration, which was first issued in August 2008, suspends procurement regulations for CUC to cope with the emergency, among other things.

Inos, in his 16-page emergency declaration extension on Dec. 23, said the CUC Wastewater Division must also respond to acid damage in the asbestos cement piping system, the product of over 30 years of anaerobic conditions in sewers.

This has caused significant damage to cement and metal infrastructure, so that key pipe systems have collapsed.

He said Dec. 18 saw the sixth sewage collection piping failure in six months.

"Failures will continue until 10 miles of sewer pipe are replaced. But replacement involves complex excavations, avoiding electric, phone and water utilities, blocking traffic, stopping the infiltration of seawater which damages treatment plant facilities, and pumping sewage around blocked and excavated areas," Inos said.

Lack of vehicles

The acting governor said CUC's Wastewater Division also needs serviceable vehicles to move its workers to and from job sites.

Presently, six vehicles are in such bad shape that they are dangerous. The lack of vehicles raises costs and hurts service, as staff and materials cannot be brought to job sites on time.

Inos said sewage lift station failures also continue, with most pumping stations having only one of two required pumps installed.

"CUC has issued a contracts to purchase 30 additional pumps; however, the lead time between issuance of the contract and pump arrival is over six months, so that CUC is still approximately three months out from pump arrival," he said.

The agency's engineer staff shortages also continue to hamper CUC's ability to anticipate and fix technical problems, but Inos said that significant engineering resources are already focused on addressing federal stipulated order issues.

The emergency extension came over a week after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fined CUC $29,000 for failing to submit a satisfactory facility oil spill response plan. This is just a fraction of the $630,000 in penalties accrued as of Oct. 16 for CUC's continued non-compliance with the provisions of two federal stipulated orders.

In March 2009, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex R. Munson signed the stipulated order that sets requirements and deadlines for CUC to meet.

The order represents the agreement between the CNMI and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency based on the requirements of the Clean Air Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. The stipulated order also provides a roadmap for providing improved water and sewer services in the CNMI.

Power service

Inos also cited CUC's hiring of technical experts to provide continued electric service.

In November, CUC replaced the power plant 1 anchor bolts, in order to stop the shifting and vibration that has ruined the plant; and foundation repairs to engines 1 and 8.

"This work has been successful. As of this month, Power Plant 1 Engines 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 are available. Engine 8's critical foundation repair and anchor bolt replacement have been completed. The major engine overhaul is to begin immediately," Inos said.

The acting governor said in effect, CUC management, "with generous federal financial assistance, has brought its generation back from the brink of system failure."

"There are adequate reserves. If maintained properly, the system can provide the CNMI's citizens and residents with adequate power," Inos said.

CUC also noted that the typhoon season appears to be ending with no direct hits on the CNMI and the agency's power distribution system.

Man nabbed for sexual abuse

Police on Tinian arrested Wednesday a man who allegedly has sex with a woman when she was just 14 years old.

Geoffrey K. Cabrera was arrested for sexual abuse of a minor in the second degree, and sexual assault in the first degree.

In issuing the arrest warrant on Tuesday, Superior Court Associate Judge Perry Inos imposed a $25,000 cash bail for Cabrera's temporary liberty.

Cabrera was taken to the Saipan Superior Court on Wednesday for his initial appearance.

Police Officer Joann A. Pangelinan stated in her report that she received information that Cabrera and the victim had a sexual relationship.

Pangelinan said that during an interview, Cabrera stated that they only had "puppy love" and there was no sex involved.

The victim, however, confessed that she and Cabrera had first sex in 2004, when she was only 14 years old, Pangelinan said.

In the past few days, police arrested several people for allegedly engaging in sexual abuse of minors. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

"I wish we can compete in off-island tournaments and draw more youth players next year."

—**Hapi Gabriel**, Northern Marianas Badminton Association official

"I wish to continue bringing the people of the CNMI more entertainment for many years to come."

—**Cuki Alvarez**, *Trench Tech, Inc. president and promoter*

I've so many wishes, but the foremost is for good health for all my family and friends, and of course for me too…and that I win the lottery and pay my bills.

—**Gloria Hunter**, retired government employee

I'd like a flying helicopter that shoots a red light.

—**Marc Christian De La Torre**, 10, Finasisu

"From Emmanuel College family: Wishing you happy holidays. Christmas is a moment to share, to enjoy, and to remember…."

—**Ramon Dizon,** *vice president, Emmanuel College*

"My Christmas wish is to spend the holidays in my hometown of Detroit, Michigan with my family. It's been 10 years since we all got together because we are spread out in U.S."

—**Mark McClardy,** *manager, Federal Aviation Administration*

"My Christmas wish is to get better immigration status…and better economy for this island."

—**Lilia George,** *cook*

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A GIFT FROM JONAS BROTHERS HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Nicole Johanna Arenovski, 12, is joined by friends on stage after she received the Epiphone Les Paul guitar autographed by American pop rock boy band Jonas Brothers that she won in the "Lines, Vines & Trying Times" promotional menu at the Hard Rock Café in Sacramento last summer. She was presented the guitar in a brief ceremony Wednesday afternoon at the Hard Rock Café in Garapan. At left is Hard Rock Café Saipan operations manager Raynaldo Perez.

'OPM OK'd conversion of some Tinian employees'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Fitial administration approved the civil service conversion of some employees at the Tinian Mayor's Office even before Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas made the request for personnel action, documents show.

According to three Office of Personnel Management requests for personnel action obtained by Saipan Tribune, those converted to civil service involved employees with limited term appointments of one year.

The OPM documents show that the mayor's departmental assistant became the Tinian Finance secretary; an administrative assistant became a sports development trainee for Tinian's Community and Cultural Affairs' Sports and Recreation; and a departmental assistant became an accountant technician I of Tinian's Department of Finance's Finance and Accounting Division.

The documents show that special assistant for administration Esther Fleming approved the conversions on Nov. 19.

Mayor San Nicolas, however, made the requests for personnel action only on Dec. 2, according to the documents.

These means the personnel actions were approved even before they were requested, said attorney Michael Dotts, counsel for Tinian mayor-elect Ramon M. Dela Cruz and co-plaintiffs in a lawsuit against San Nicolas and others.

Dotts also noted that the personnel action request was originally typewritten, for a limited term appointment of one year only.

"That's crossed out [limited term appointment for one year] and handwritten over it is 'conversion to civil service,'" Dotts said.

The lawyer said it is very unusual to have conversions approved before they are requested and to have them changed from one year contracts to full civil service.

"I hope OPM realizes that these things were approved before they were requested," Dotts said.

Dela Cruz and the winners in the Nov. 7 election for Tinian positions in the Senate and House filed the lawsuit to stop the $1 million loan from the Marianas Public Land Trust, which they said is based on an unconstitutional law.

Dela Cruz's co-plaintiffs are Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider, senator-elect Francisco Q. Cruz, and representative-elect Trenton B. Connor.

The plaintiffs sued outgoing mayor Jose San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian senator Joseph M. Mendiola, Tinian Sen. Henry San Nicolas, outgoing Tinian Rep. Edwin P. Aldan, and the Office of the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan for breach of fiduciary duty.

The incoming officials also asked the court to stop the incumbents from reassigning existing municipal employees to other departments or divisions, and from appointing new employees.

On Wednesday, Superior Court Associate Judge Ramona V. Manglona issued an order prohibiting Mayor San Nicolas and Sen. Mendiola from entering into any loans or investments with MPLT on behalf of the Tinian municipality without first providing Tinian mayor-elect Dela Cruz and his co-plaintiffs at least 10 days advance notice.

The complainants failed to obtain a preliminary injunction on Tuesday to stop the outgoing mayor from further processing employment conversions but fortunately, Dotts said, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has already acted to stop these conversions.

Celebrate the New Years
at Palms Resort Saipan
New Year's Eve Specials
December 31, 2009
Indian Dinner Buffet at Minami Restaurant
$25.00 adult & $12.50 child
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
New Year's Countdown Party at PauPau Bar
With Live Entertainment by Maggie Naputi
Starting 9:00 pm
New Year's Day Specials
January 1, 2010
Special Brunch at Minami Restaurant
$38.00 adult & $19.00 child
11:00 am - 2:00 pm
Seafood Dinner Buffet at Minami Restaurant
$38.00 adult & $19.00 child
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
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please call 322-3311.

Motorist sued over moped-car collision

A Wisconsin resident has filed a lawsuit for the injuries she suffered when a moped she was driving collided with a car on Tinian.

Leah Artin, through counsel Bruce Berline, sued Laarni L. Pamilar for negligence.

Artin asked the Superior Court to order Pamilar to pay her damages, court costs, and attorney's fees.

Berline stated in the complaint that on April 12, 2009, at 6pm Artin was driving a moped south and was approaching the intersection of Broadway and the cross road near the Island Garden.

Berline said Pamilar was driving a four-door Hyundai Sonata north on Broadway.

As Artin approached the intersection, Pamilar stopped the car, with the intent of turning left across the southbound lane in order to proceed east on the crossroad.

As Artin approached the intersection, the car continued to wait at the intersection. When Artin entered the intersection, Pamilar allegedly suddenly, without any warning, accelerated the vehicle.

Berline said Pamilar turned left directly in front of and across Artin's path of travel.

"At the time that [Artin] was proceeding through the intersection, [Pamiliar] failed to yield the right of way to plaintiff," Berline said.

The lawyer said Pamilar's failure to yield caused the car to collide with Artin's moped.

He said Artin, who was wearing a helmet, hit the passenger side of the car as it passed in front while plaintiff was rightfully traveling in her lane.

As a result of the collision, Berline said, Artin flew over the moped's handlebars, struck the vehicle and then hit the asphalt.

He said Artin suffered severe injuries to the back and neck such as lacerations, abrasions, and contusions, along with other internal injuries.

Berline said the plaintiff lost wages because her injuries prevented her from attending to her job.

Berline said at the time of the incident, the weather was clear and bright and the road surface was dry. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Echaluse and Torres win VFW essay writing contest

From left, VFW Post 3457 commander and chairman of the "Voice of Democracy" essay competition Mariano Fajardo, Marianas High School second place winner Panidta Torres, Mac Chargualof (back center), first placer Eileen Echaluse, and commander Larry Guerrero pose for a group picture at the VFW headquarters on Beach Road on Dec. 23.

JOVAN FRED

By JOVAN I. FRED
jovan_fred@saipantribune.com
REPORTER-TRAINEE

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3457 presented Wednesday certificates and checks to two Marianas High School students who won the Voice of Democracy essay writing competition.

First place winner Eileen Echaluse and second place Panidta Torres attended the awarding night at the VFW headquarters on Dec. 24.

Both MHS student are planning to participate again in next year's essay competition.

"I didn't expect to win, but I just went ahead and wrote the essay," said Echaluse adding that she will decide later on how she will spend the money she won.

Echaluse was awarded $100 for winning at the post level and $150 for winning at the district level, for a total cash prize of $250. Torres won $100.

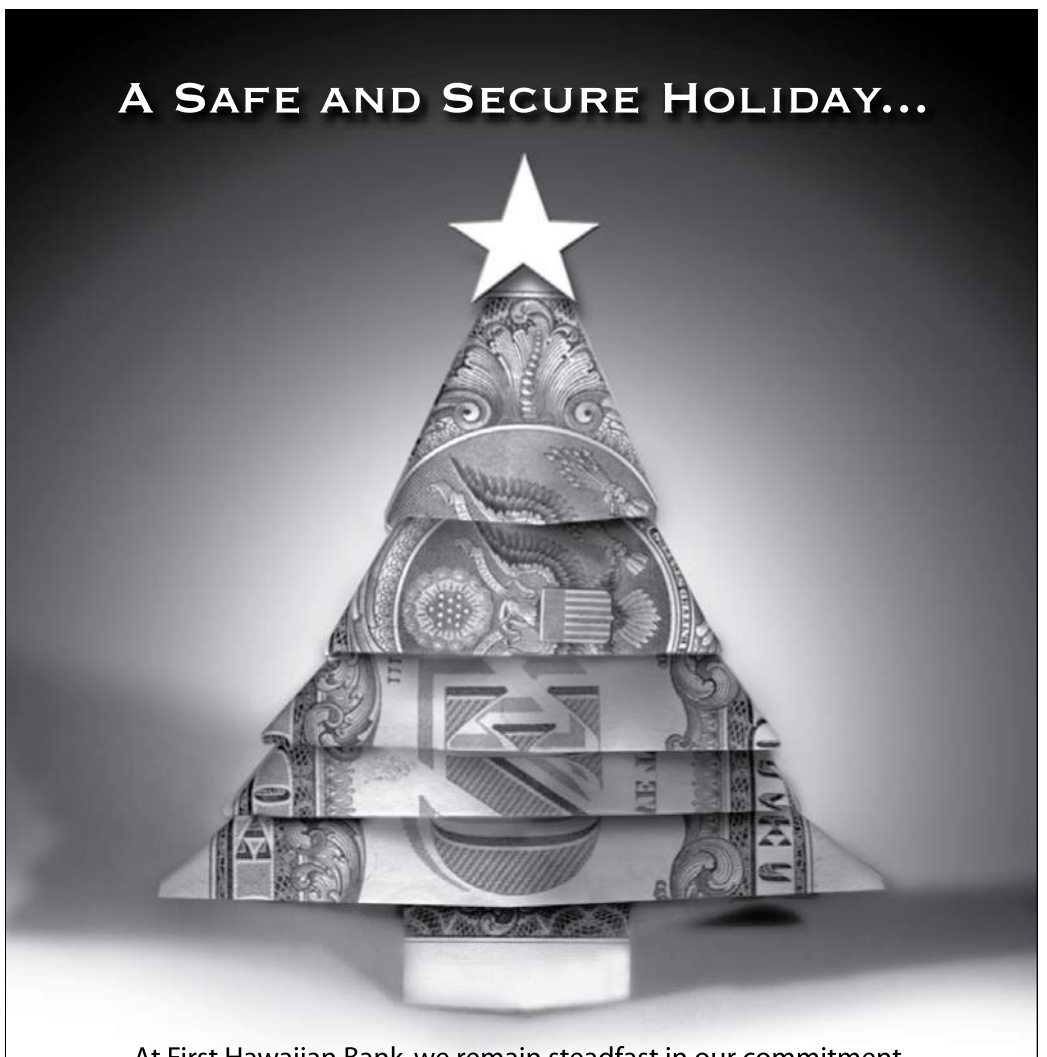
The Veteran of Foreign Wars Saipan Post 3457 has been sponsoring this essay competition every year. This program helps students understand America's history, traditions, institutions, civic responsibilities democracy, flag etiquette, and patriotism. More than 50 participants joined the essay competition this year.

"It helps them think what democracy and Americanism really is," VFW Post 3457 commander Mariano Fajardo said.

Family and friends were not the only ones who supported and motivated Echaluse and Torres while writing their essays. Both students credited MHS teacher John Davis for helping them out. Davis teaches Advanced Placement courses in Language Arts and U.S. Government. He is also the VFW Post 3457 Quarter Master.

Echaluse said she wants to show her appreciation to Davis with a gift. "I will buy Mr. Davis a Christmas gift," she said.

Panidta who showed up at the awards ceremony with her father, said she will save her prize for later. "I will save it up for an important use," she said.



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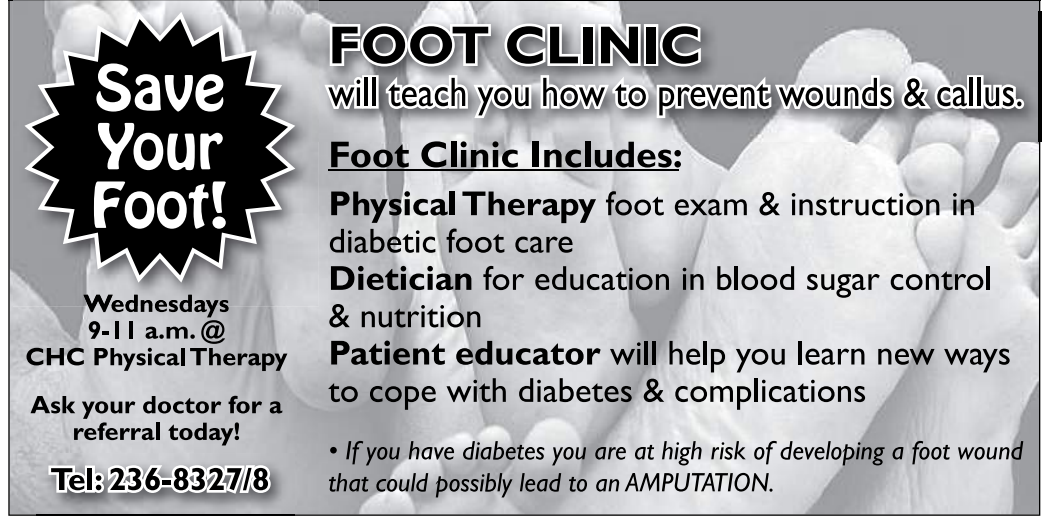
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Conditional permit for Tinian landfill eyed

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CNMI Coastal Resources Management director John Joyner disclosed that local agencies working on the permits for the proposed Tinian landfill are likely to soon give a positive response to the application.

Joyner said the Tinian Municipality has already applied for a permit and different agencies such as the Coastal Resources Management Office, Department of Public Works, and the Commonwealth Improvement Project Office have 60 days to act on the application.

A public hearing was conducted last week, during which community members expressed full support for the project. Over 20 individuals attended the hearing on Tinian, according to Joyner.

Joyner

"Agencies will likely approve it. In case there are a few documents or requirements that need to be completed, there's a conditional permit that could also be granted," he told *Saipan Tribune.*

Although the identified site is within the area being leased by the U.S. military area, Joyner said the application doesn't required approval from the military.

The only condition set for using a portion of the site for the landfill is to close the area during extensive military exercises to protect villagers, he added.

Joyner said the Tinian delegation and the municipality government are now exploring the idea of building a transfer station that would store the trash during these exercises before delivery to the landfill. Among the concerns being studied are the costs the transfer station will incur.

But once the issue is finalized, Joyner said, the project would push through as planned.

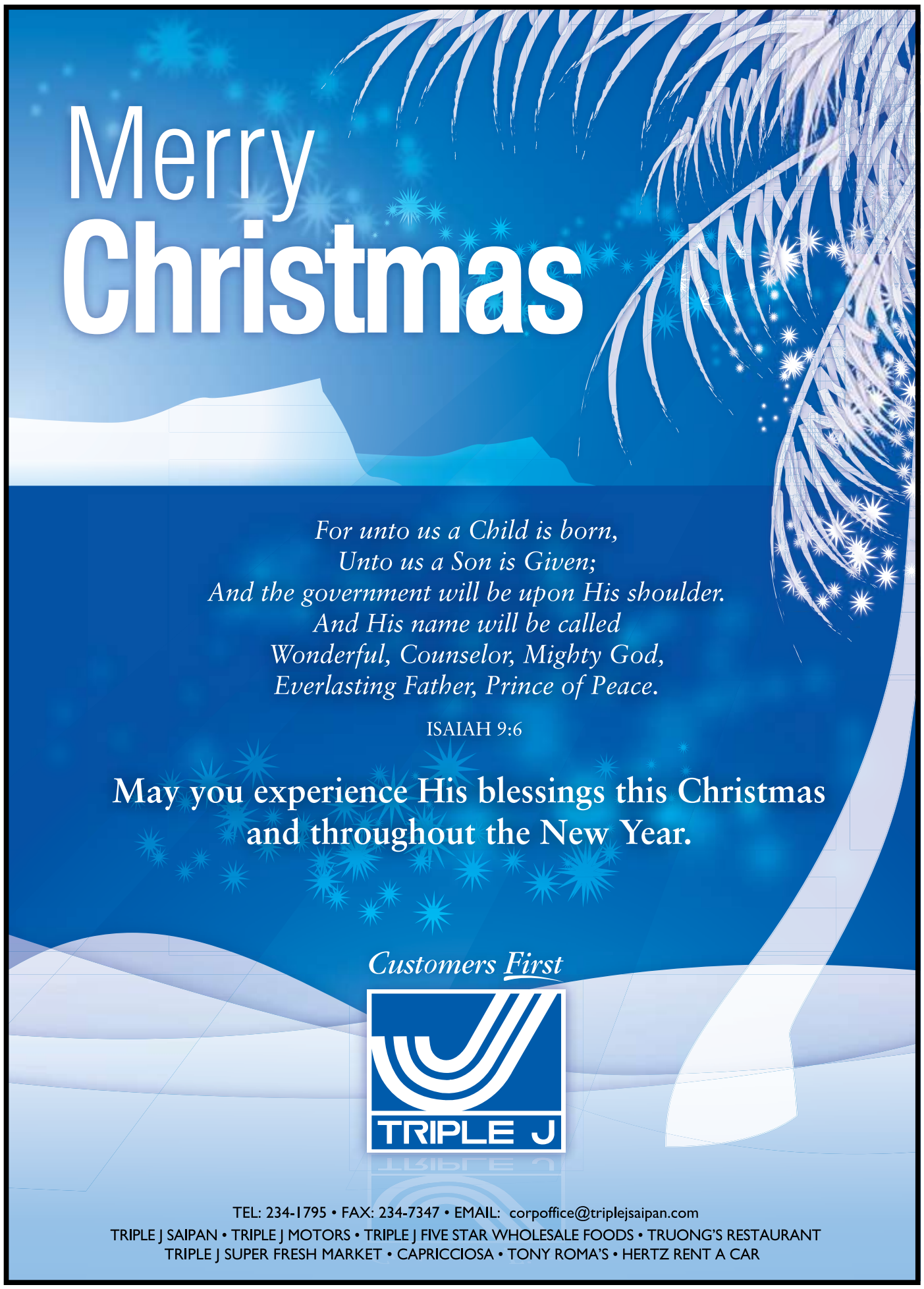
The Tinian Legislative Delegation has allotted over $4 million for the planning and actual partial construction of a new landfill for the municipality from CIP money.

The existing Tinian landfill has been found not compliant with current regulations and poses numerous environmental and health hazards. The site is also near the West Tinian airport, which poses human risks.

Saipan Tribune learned that the dump's relocation was also a result of concerns raised by Marianas Resort Development Corp., which wants to use the site to build a casino.

The delegation has already spent about $800,000 to study and plan the relocation of the dump.

Once built, the new landfill is expected to accommodate up to 30 years' worth of solid waste.


Merry
Christmas
For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is Given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
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Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Dec. 25, 2002

'Grinch' casts spell on NMI

It's probably the last thing CNMI taxpayers want to hear on Christmas Day but Gov. Juan N. Babauta could no longer put off reporting the sad news: Tax rebate/refund checks will not be released for the holidays. This comes following the failure of the government and the Bank of Guam to zero in on an agreement on the $19-million loan for the payment of rebates/refunds. Babauta and Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente yesterday apologized for the government's failure to have the checks out by Christmas, but assured that other potential sources are being looked at to meet the overdue rebate/refund payments.

Disaster food stamps for Rota OK'd

The U.S. Department of Agriculture gave the people of Rota a timely Christmas gift, following its approval of the Commonwealth's request for the distribution of emergency food stamps on the island. The Nutrition Assistance Program of the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs yesterday started processing the applications of Rota residents for emergency food stamps, as the island reels from the assault of Supertyphoon Pongsona. "We mobilized people already," DCCA Secretary Juan L. Babauta said, adding that two representatives from the local NAP office were on Rota yesterday to start receiving applications.

Dec. 25, 2003

'Cash flow woes expected'

The current cash flow problem besetting the Babauta administration is not really surprising because it pretty much conforms with the House of Representatives' projections for this fiscal year, particularly the first quarter, according to House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider. At the same time, he pointed out that, although there is heightened economic activity in the first quarter due to the holiday retail sales, this will not be reflected in the books until February and March-the last two months of the second quarter. "I think that I've been quite consistent-and right-in our projections for this year. And traditionally, the first quarter is always problematic in terms of cash flow because of the holidays. Revenue is always expected to dip during the first quarter going toward the holidays. By the second and third quarter, you will begin to see the effect of consumer behavior in the first quarter. The collection would be due in the second and third quarter, so it is expected that the first quarter is always low," he told reporters yesterday.

CUC board approves retro pay

The majority members of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board voted to give ahead of the Department of Finance the retroactive pay amounting to some $410,000 due the CUC personnel for year 1993. The decision now requires the board to touch its already committed payment check to the Office of the Public Auditor and the Department of Finance. The retro pay would be sourced from the CUC's second payment check worth $588,000, which is intended to settle its outstanding accounts with OPA. CUC owes the OPA some $4 million in unpaid contribution spanning six years.

Dec. 25, 2004

$20M loan with NMIRF?

The Executive Branch is planning to use Compact money as leverage for a $20-million lump sum loan from the NMI Retirement Fund to finance the Public School System's capital improvement projects. This came following the governor's announcement that he would commit the entire Compact Impact funds totaling $5.1 million a year in the next four years to PSS. The administration favors giving the whole $20 million to PSS instead of giving the amount in $5.1 million increments, citing that the former would result in greater efficiency. Lump sum spending would also allow the government to develop a new line of credit.

'Deteriorating classrooms pose a hazard to students'

A Board of Education official said that the current state of disrepair and deterioration of classrooms on Saipan pose a hazard to students. BOE secretary-treasurer Marja Lee Taitano said the use of Public School System facilities as evacuation centers during natural disasters have also wrought havoc on the school calendar. In a board meeting held Monday, Taitano narrated to the board her recent inspection of school facilities around the island. She said one school had its classroom doors infested by termites. Taitano said she could not hold the door up and it seemed it would fall on her any time because of the infestation-which makes it an absolute hazard for children using the classroom.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

For unto us a child is born

Nothing bundles the mystery and awe of life more than the birth of a child. Innocence and purity, love and compassion, faith and hope are all qualities associated with a birthing.

Resurgent Christianity claims that at Christmas, an awareness of the infinite is included in our awareness of finitude. The Jesus of faith as the Christ is the awareness of the infinite in our finite life. It is metaphorically "heaven on Earth." *Immanuel* is "God-with-us"; spirit is in the here and now. When this awareness is born in us, when we are one with it, taking into our bodies the Eucharistic elements of its brokenness and spilled-outness (expenditure), we experience life's immeasurable significance. Thus, this season of good tidings!

Accretion to the symbols associated with this season has piled up in its almost two millennium of conscious lifting of the birth of a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. No matter that the Virgin birth as a tenet of theology has been converted into a debatable fact of gynecology; that the symbols of the Davidic line and birth in lowly Bethlehem have been transformed into historical chronology rather than images of religious piety. The Teutonic *Tannenbaum* is the fir tree that stays evergreen in winter, and the reindeer are signs of vitality and strength in the cold of winter, both on prominent display in front of our Multi-Purpose Center and at the Paseo de Marianas.

The message of the season is unmistakably one of freshness, if not new beginnings. "Unless one is born again …" is an evangelical refrain. *Feliz Navidad* of Bethlehem goes along with *Feliz Pasqua* of the Easter empty tomb, with the latter, annually CUC-lit along Beach Road on Saipan!

In this Ecozoic Era of freely and evolutionarily reinventing the human, perhaps, we can greet each other with songs of "For unto us a human is born!" For within the walls of many houses of worships is a reclaiming of the "original blessing" after centuries of anxiously laboring under the burden of "original sin." We have come to discover that faith in the trustworthiness of existence is a choice, and to do so implies a particular lifestyle. The secular world, which theologians has since claimed to be the current face of *oikumene,* the "household of God," has become the venue for promoting the Covenant of Compassion across religious and non-religious traditions toward the whole of the planet and everything in it.

Beyond Santa's "Ho! Ho! Ho!" and the jingle bells of horse- or water buffalo-drawn carriages, may we this season rediscover that the "child born unto us" is universally representative of everyone who "cometh into this world." That is worth celebrating. And in its growth, lies our challenging role to reinvent the human!

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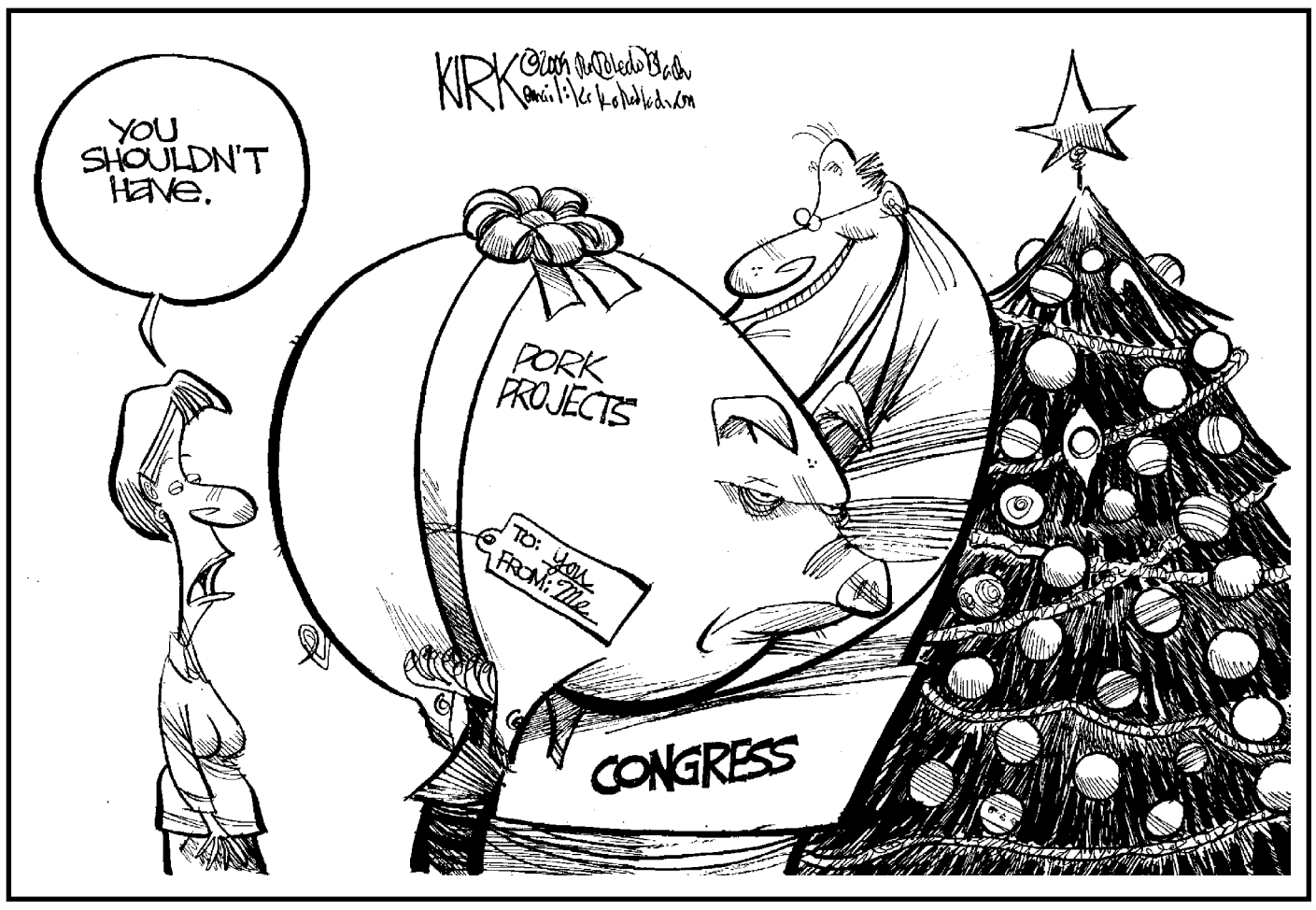

Race plays a leading role in discussions about 'Avatar'

By COURTLAND MILLOY
(C) 2009, THE WASHINGTON POST

If you thought James Cameron's "Avatar" was just a 3-D fantasy flick about nice cat people vs. mechanized mad men, think again. There's a fourth dimension, a shadowy back story about race that has the sci-fi blogosphere engaged in its own war of the worlds.

Annalee Newitz, writing last week on her science blog io9, criticized "Avatar" for depicting yet another white man as a hero in the liberation struggles of oppressed people of color.

As happens in movies such as "District 9," "Dances With Wolves" and "The Last Samurai," Newitz wrote, "a white guy manages to get himself accepted into a closed society of people of color and eventually becomes its most awesome member."

> *This is not a story about a white man who goes to lead native peoples as their condescending savior. ... It's a story about a backward white man who is transformed and takes up armed struggle against imperialism alongside them.*

I came away from "Avatar" with a similar feeling, although not nearly as strong as I had after watching, say, "Mississippi Burning," which portrayed the FBI as heroes of the civil rights movement.

And yet, I'd recommend seeing "Avatar," not only for the sensational special effects but also to participate in an important discussion about race.

As a movie summary, suffice it to say that an ex-Marine named Jake Sully uses futuristic means to transform himself from a human, or Sky Person, into a Na'vi cat person. Then he infiltrates the cat people to gather intelligence for a military invasion but ends up falling in love with a cat woman. A "race traitor" to his fellow humans, Sully leads the cat people in thwarting the military invasion.

"This is the essence of the white guilt fantasy, laid bare," Newitz wrote. "It's not just a wish to be absolved of the crimes whites have committed against people of color; it's not just a wish to join the side of moral justice in battle. It's a wish to lead people of color from the inside rather than from the (oppressive, white) outside. Think of it this way. Avatar is a fantasy about ceasing to be white, giving up the old human meatsack to join the blue people, but never losing white privilege."

The Moving Image blogger picked up that same theme. "Sully has the power to choose between being a dominating Sky Person or a Na'vi victim, which in the end yields greater power — the audience's empathy. Only white men are privileged enough to have such choices."

Some might wonder how blue cat people become stand-ins for oppressed people of color. It's more obvious than it seems.

You can tell some cat people are Native Americans, for instance, because, as Newitz describes them, they "wear feathers in their hair, worship nature gods, paint their faces for war, use bows and arrows, and live in tribes."

In addition to Native Americans, I saw some cat people as black people in disguise. This racial effect is cleverly accomplished by using certain speech patterns and body language. One cat man spoke with a West Indian accent, for instance.

"By the end of the film, you're left wondering why the film needed the Jake Sully character at all," the Moving Image wrote. "The film could have done just as well by focusing on an actual Na'vi native who comes into contact with crazy humans who have no respect for the environment."

Newitz concluded: "Speaking as a white person ... I'd like to watch some movies about people of color ... from the perspective of that group, without injecting a random white ... character to explain everything to me."

Eric Ribellarsi, writing on the anti-imperialist blog Fire Collective, fired back at the critics:

"This is not a story about a white man who goes to lead native peoples as their condescending savior. ... It's a story about a backward white man who is transformed and takes up armed struggle against imperialism alongside them."

He cited the radical abolitionist John Brown as a possible template for the Sully character. In leading the fateful raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Brown, in effect, became a black man and gave his life in the fight against slavery.

Sully becomes blue and puts his life on the line for the Na'vi.

Personally, I prefer my sci-fi movies to be mindless escapism. But when it comes to a national discussion about race — to the extent that there is one at all — I accept the reality that Hollywood is the moderator and the Internet is the forum.

"Avatar" certainly keeps the discussion going.

Milloy is a columnist for The Washington Post.

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For naughty, press 1...

By ED STEPHENS

Ed is a pilot, economist, and writer. He holds a degree in economics from UCLA and is a former U.S. naval officer. His column runs every Friday. Visit Ed at TropicalEd.com and SaipanBlog.com.

SAIPAN (Gonzo Wire Service)—Tropical islands are not commonly associated with snowy Christmas traditions, but Saipan will soon be one of the closest U.S. venues to Santa's new lair: The Santa Claus corporation's North Pole operation has announced it will liquidate before year end, and that Santa's operations will be outsourced to a call center in India and a network of factories in Asia. Santa himself is moving to Micronesia.

"In terms of sales, we're going cyber," said a Santa Claus spokesman from their North Pole headquarters. "Brick and mortar involves too many fixed costs. Also, sending Santa around to the world's shopping malls was an inefficient way to provide customer service. And, finally, our production process is inefficient and our labor costs too high."

The spokesman said that as of Dec. 26, 2009, all elves will be laid off, and that a "one time only" offering on reindeer sausage would be featured in Santa's new online catalog.

Starting in 2010, children wanting to make their annual plea to Santa can either video conference online, or phone Santa at the call center, which is located in Bangalore, India.

This reporter called the Santa number and received the following automated voice message from the system, which is currently in beta-testing:

"Thank you for calling Santa Claus. Your call is important to us. Please listen carefully as our options have changed. If you have been naughty, press 1. If you have been nice, press 2..."

However, development of this menu has been halted by litigation, as various American civil rights groups have objected to the judgmental nature of the term "naughty."

Meanwhile, the production arm of Santa's operations will be entirely outsourced to a network of vendors in Asia, who will use advanced methods and just-in-time inventory techniques to wring maximum efficiency out of the process, and to eliminate the risks of over-producing obsolete products in a fickle world.

Said the Santa spokesman, "In the past we've been stuck with 8 million excess Beanie Babies and before that, 2.5 million velour shirts, when fashions changed. We take it in the neck when we have to liquidate this stuff on eBay, which kills our debt service coverage ratios. We used to pay LIBOR plus 50 basis points for credit, now we're looking at a 400 basic point premium. It just doesn't pencil out any more."

Inventory risks have just accelerated as high-tech products become obsolete within days of production.

Santa had already outsourced many of his product design and engineering tasks starting in 2002, and the manufacturing activity is a logical follow-up to that decision.

As for the jolly old man himself, he is reportedly happy to be leaving the rigors of the North Pole winters and was recently seen shopping for a house in the U.S. flagged tropics. "He considered Saipan," said his spokesman, "but the laws there won't let him own property; so instead he bought a nice four-bedroom, three-bath home in Guam, and is considering investing in several apartment complexes there as well."

Santa plans to tele-commute from Guam to his various duties, though he is also looking forward to traveling in Asia on occasion. A source in Hong Kong said that Kowloon-based tailor W.W. Chan received a "substantial" order from an unnamed client for one dozen red furry suits size XL, thus fueling rumors that Santa may intend to remain in the public eye.

"He's got a strong brand identity," said the source, "and we think he's good for 10, maybe 20 million dollars a year in product endorsements."

Santa's spokesman confirmed that their overall strategy is to not only produce in Asia, but to eventually sell there as well. "The American consumer will soon be broke, so our long-term goal is to penetrate the Asian consumer market."

The spokesman acknowledged that Santa faces some challenges from entrenched brands in Asia. "Saipanda is no threat, but Hello Kitty is as tenacious as a prom night pimple, so we've got our work cut out for us."

As for Saipan, a major golf resort confirmed that Santa has been teeing up there. "Santa may not want to invest here," said a local golf pro, " but he enjoys his visits, and he spends a lot of money in the process, so at least we're not on the sidelines entirely."

5 myths about Darfur

By JOHN PRENDERGAST
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

During Sudan's half-century of independence, few spots on Earth have witnessed as much death and destruction, with 2 1/2 million war-related fatalities during the past two decades alone. Although the Darfur genocide that began in 2003 is only one of the conflicts raging in the country, they all stem from the same cause: the abuse of power. The ruling party represses independent voices and supports militias that have used genocide, child soldiers and rape as weapons of war.

Sudan faces a critical new year, with an unfree election coming in April and a referendum on the independence of the south the following January — tripwires that could provoke a return to full-scale war. In Washington, meanwhile, few challenges have produced a greater chasm between words and deeds. A first step toward closing that gap is debunking the myths about Sudan that persist among policymakers, diplomats and the public:

1 The genocide in Darfur is largely over.

Because the regime's mass burning of villages in Darfur has ended and mortality rates have plummeted, some have concluded that the worst is done. African Union officials have even claimed that the war in Darfur is over, while Scott Gration, President Obama's special envoy for Sudan, referred in June to the ongoing violence in Darfur as "remnants of genocide." But the government is blocking all independent avenues of reporting, so there is no way to know the level of targeted violence or its perpetrators.

For example, mass rape is one of the main weapons of genocide, and there is ample anecdotal evidence that it is still occurring in Darfur. But in March the regime expelled over a dozen nongovernmental organizations, many of which provided support and protection for survivors of rape, so there no longer is any systematic reporting of sexual assaults.

There are vast humanitarian-aid red zones throughout Darfur. Journalists are systematically denied access, independent local voices are repressed, and U.N. groups and other international agencies are intimidated or simply prevented from investigating reports of human rights violations.

2 China's oil investments in Sudan keep it from pressuring the government.

China, which has invested more than $9 billion during the past decade in Sudan's oil sector, has provided weapons to the regime and run interference for it at the U.N. Security Council. Major international efforts to pressure Beijing to play a more constructive role have fallen on deaf ears. However, the game could change. If the 2005 peace deal between Sudan's north and south collapses and southerners go back to war, their first targets will be Chinese oil installations in the north. China, therefore, has a vested interest in peace and security. Following up on Obama's trip to China, Washington and Beijing could partner in a diplomatic "surge" to end the conflict in Darfur and prevent a recurrence of war in the south.

3 Pressure on Sudan hasn't worked, so let's try incentives.

Obama administration officials and international diplomats often argue that all available pressures aimed at the regime — including sanctions, embargoes and diplomatic isolation — have failed, so it's time to use carrots rather than sticks. Gration, the presidential envoy, told The Washington Post that "kids, countries — they react to gold stars, smiley faces, handshakes, agreements, talk." Yet, in the 20 years since the regime in Khartoum came to power, it has compromised only in response to the threat or application of meaningful pressure from abroad, such as when it expelled Osama bin Laden from the sanctuary it was providing, stopped supporting slave-raiding militias in the south and struck a peace deal with southern rebels. There are plenty more pressure tactics that could be deployed through the Security Council or other coalitions, such as tightening the asset freezes on the ruling party's nouveau riche leaders, providing greater support to the International Criminal Court's cases against Sudanese officials, denying the regime debt relief and expanding the five-year-old U.N. arms embargo.

4 Indicting President Bashir hurt peace efforts.

This one would be funny if it weren't so sad. First of all, the peace process in Darfur was moribund long before the International Criminal Court indicted Omar Hassan al-Bashir in March for crimes against humanity. Second, it is precisely because there has been no accountability for such crimes that the violence continues. Third, internal divisions are emerging within the regime, as other high-ranking officials worry that they might be the next ones accused. In reality, the indictment against Bashir has given the international community real leverage to move peace efforts forward.

Since seizing power in a 1989 coup, Bashir has ruled despotically and has demonstrated a willingness to maintain power by any means necessary, including authorizing genocidal war tactics. No plan exists to execute the ICC arrest warrant as long as he remains president, and he appears to be the ruling-party candidate for the April election. But unless there are consequences for the crimes of his regime, the atrocities will continue.

5 The United States is doing everything it can to end the violence.

Colin Powell, who while serving as President George W. Bush's secretary of state became the first U.S. official to publicly state that the violence in Darfur constituted "genocide," also said the United States was doing "all it can" to end it. Obama officials have made similar statements since taking office.

And while the United States has provided by far the most humanitarian aid to Sudan's multiple emergencies and has contributed more than any other country to peacekeeping efforts there, opportunities abound to exercise more initiative. The United States has not led international efforts to draft a peace deal that addresses the root causes of violence in Darfur. The United States has not built even a small coalition of countries willing to impose consequences on a genocidal regime. The United States has not presented a credible case that this regime is supporting ethnic conflict in the south again as the election approaches. The United States has not stood up for a free and fair election in Sudan by suspending U.S. taxpayer support to the current process. And the United States has not provided meaningful assistance to the ICC to expand its work in Sudan.

In short, the new administration, which includes several officials with a track record of calling for real action on Sudan, is missing huge opportunities to help break the deadly cycle of conflict.

John Prendergast is a co-founder of Enough, the Center for American Progress project to end genocide, and co-author with Don Cheadle of Not on Our Watch.

Holiday message for Guam servicemembers

By MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Special to the Saipan Tribune

During the holiday season we should take pause and be grateful for the selfless contributions of our men and women in uniform, especially those serving in harms way from Guam.

During this holiday season I urge everyone on Guam to take some time to either send a holiday message to our servicemembers through our local Red Cross Chapter or by volunteering or donating to the USO or by contributing to other non-profit organizations of your choice.

It is difficult for our servicemembers, including those in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, the National Guard, Reserves and the Coast Guard, to be away from their families during the holidays and these expressions of support help boost their morale and remind them that they are appreciated.

Our country continues to face threats to our safety and security but our men and women in uniform continue to answer the call to duty and we should be mindful that it is through their service and sacrifice that allows us to remain free and safe at home this holiday season.

The coming year will continue to test the readiness of our Armed Forces with a surge of forces in Afghanistan but I am confident in the leadership of President Barack Obama and our commanders on the ground to get this done right and bring our men and women in uniform home safe.

Letter to the Editor

Appreciation letter

I would like to give thanks to these individuals who helped me and my son Rejay T. Iskawa in his medical treatment in Guam: To the Lt. Governor's staff, Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos, Representative-elect Joseph M. Palacios, Mr. and Mrs. Juan and Becky K. Tenorio, Mrs. Rita K. Billy, and Mr. Lino S. Tenorio. Thank you very much for all your kind help. From me and my family, we would like to wish your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. God Bless you all. Thank you very much.

Melani Teregeyo
Rejay T. Iskawa
Dadan, Saipan

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Sunny	▲84	▼77
Palau	Showers	▲87	▼77
Yap	Sunny	▲86	▼76
Chuuk	Showers	▲89	▼80
Pohnpei	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Kosrae	Showers	▲88	▼78
Majuro	Mostly Sunny	▲84	▼76

Around The Globe

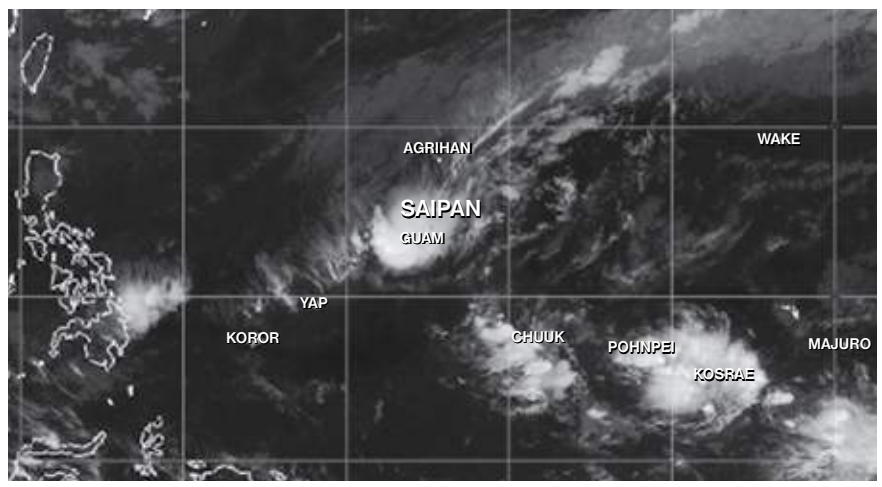
Auckland	Sunny	▲73	▼59
Beijing	Sunny	▲23	▼11
Hong Kong	Cloudy	▲67	▼62
Honolulu	Showers	▲78	▼68
London	Showers	▲41	▼37
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲69	▼46
Manila	Sunny	▲86	▼74
Melbourne	Sunny	▲70	▼53
Miami	Thundershowers	▲82	▼67
New York	Showers	▲40	▼37
Osaka	Cloudy	▲52	▼37
Paris	Partly Sunny	▲42	▼35
Pusan	Mostly Cloudy	▲43	▼15
Rome	Rain	▲60	▼41
Salem	Mostly Sunny	▲42	▼28
San Francisco	Sunny	▲57	▼44
Seoul	Ice	▲30	▼ 4
Tokyo	Partly Sunny	▲48	▼40
Washington, DC	Frozen Rain	▲41	▼40

Tides

Saipan Harbor

1:02 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.3 Feet
6:55 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet
1:39 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
8:53 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2009

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends west-southwestward from the northeast corner of discussion area at 25N180 to north of Wake Island at 24N166E then continues as a shear line to near Minami Tori Shima at 23N155E and turns southwestward across Pagan at 18N146E to beyond 130E at 10N. Extensive cloudiness and widespread rain are found along and up to 350 miles northwest of the cold front and shear line between 180 and 142E. Scattered showers are seen along and up to 150 miles northwest of the rest of the shear line. A low-level trough reaches southwestward from near Pagan at 20N147E to a circulation centered northeast of Yap at 11N141E then turns southeastward to a weak circulation centered southwest of Chuuk at 4N148E. Interaction with the nearby shear line is creating numerous showers and isolated thunderstorms near the trough axis from Tinian northward to Alamagan between 15N and 18N from 144E to 151E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are present near the low-level circulation over Yap, Guam and Rota within 75 miles of a line from 9N136E to 13N143E to 14N150E. Convergence along the east side of the trough is producing similar weather northwest of Chuuk within 60 miles of a line from 12N149E to 8N150E. A near-equatorial trough stretches east-northeastward from Halmahera to 3N138E and continues eastward through two weak circulations centered southwest of Chuuk at 3N148E and south of Kosrae at 3N164E then turns southeastward to end at EQ170E aided by favorable winds aloft. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are evident near the trough axis over Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae between 3N and 8N from 146E to 166E. Converging winds east of the near-equatorial trough are causing identical conditions over Tarawa and Butaritari Atolls but south of Majuro between 5N and the equator from 170E to 180.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Saturday	6:41 AM	5:54 PM
Sunday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Monday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Tuesday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	12:14 PM	12:06 AM
Saturday	12:52 PM	12:55 AM
Sunday	1:34 PM	1:47 AM
Monday	2:22 PM	2:43 AM
Tuesday	3:16 PM	3:43 AM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am	
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm	
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1 via ICN	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1 via GUM	1, 3, 5, 6, 7
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

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The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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DCCA report: 22 vital posts need to be filled

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
Moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Twenty-two key positions for various divisions under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs need to be filled to improve the programs' delivery of services to people, according to the agency's transition report submitted to Gov. Benigno R. Fitial.

DCCA Secretary Melvin Faisao said there is no doubt that DCCA will be able to fully meet its mandate if given the chance to fill these posts.

Saipan Tribune learned that these positions include a public information officer, clinical psychologists for the Juvenile Detention Unit and Office on Aging, nurses, Boys and Girls Scout coordinator, physical therapist, social workers, amateur sports coordinator, certified license child care inspectors, certified juvenile detention inspectors, and certified Chamorro and Carolinian translators.

DCCA handles eight divisions that include the Arts Council, Division of Youth Services, Language Policy Commission, Child Care Licensing, Aging Office, and Division of Sports and Recreation.

"If given the chance that requested FTEs will materialize, there is no doubt that the DCCA will continue to improve and enhance the programs' delivery of services to our community," Faisao told the governor in his report.

DCCA also has a vacant deputy secretary position but, due to financial constraints, Faisao said the department does not currently need to appoint one to the post.

Public Law 16-32 mandates a $2.2 million budget for DCCA. Saipan Tribune learned that DCCA spends this on personnel, $1.7 million; non-personnel, $381,288; and utilities, $127,654. The agency has an approved 82 FTEs for the fiscal year.

It gets the following regular federal funding:

- $12 million, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamp);
- $1.9 million, Child Care Development Fund;
- $1.3 million, Social Services Block Grant;
- $900,000, Community Service Block Grant;
- $401,000, National Park Service-Historic Preservation Grant;
- $280,000, National Arts Endowment;
- $700,000, Administration of Aging under Title III and VII;
- $429,000, U.S. Department of Labor Title V;
- $76,000, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Grant; and
- $50,000, Residential Energy Assistance Challenge Program.

Under the stimulus funding, DCCA will get the following this fiscal year:

- $1.8 million, Child Care Development Fund;
- $770,000, Community Services Block Grant;
- $60,000, Administration on Aging for Title III;
- $89,000, U.S. Department of Labor for Title V; and
- $25,000, National Endowment for the Arts.

Faisao disclosed that the agency is facing major challenges in providing quality welfare assistance and financing social services for youth delinquency.

It is also facing obstacles in providing programmable services to address the aging population on the islands, and services that will provide opportunities and alleviate poverty.

"These problems have been recognized for many years… but with the recent deepening financial crisis, there is increasing pressure to find solutions," Faisao said.

USCIS: Use PO Box on immigration applications

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is advising people living in the CNMI who submit an immigration application to list their Post Office Box where the immigration form asks for a street or physical address. This is very important as applications that do not use P.O. Boxes are being returned to the USCIS office.

Use your P.O. Box when requesting Advance Parole on the I-131 Application for Travel Document or your application will be delayed.

If you filed for Advance Parole using a street name, the Post Office may have delivered to USCIS, so go to the Application Support Center at TSL Plaza for your Travel Document.

If an applicant has already mailed another type of application—other than for Advance Parole—to USCIS using a street name, it is important to complete a change of address. There are four ways to do change your address:

1. Complete a Change of Address online at www.uscis.gov/addresschange.
2. Call USCIS Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283.
3. Make an InfoPass appointment online at www.infopass.uscis.gov to visit the local USCIS ASC on Saipan.
4. Send an e-mail to uscis.saipan@dhs.gov.

If you have a pending application or petition and are not a U.S. citizen, you must also complete a paper or electronic AR-11 Change of Address to change your address in our master database. This form is available on-line at www.uscis.gov; by mail through USCIS Customer Service at 1-800-375-5283; or at the USCIS office at TSL Plaza in Saipan.

USCIS is the agency in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that handles immigration benefits. ***(PR)***

GUANGDONG HARDWARE
GUANGDONG MILEI? GUANGDONG BA ITO?
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WATERBASE PRIMER $17.04/GAL | $76.99/4.25 GAL
GLOSS WHITE ENAMEL $18.79/GAL
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FREE GIVEAWAY FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF PAINTS.
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2) $400.00 & ABOVE: SHOWER ROOM DOOR WORTH $132.00
3) $600.00 & ABOVE: 1 WATERCLOSET WORTH $178.00
THIN-SET MORTAR $8.40
JOINT COMPAND $17.50 5 GAL.
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NEW ARRIVAL OF CERAMIC TILES, 12"*12" $0.79/pc • 8"*12" $0.52/pc
OTHERS
CEMENT $6.60/BAG
DELIVERY CHARGE TO TINIAN-$3.00/BAG
HOLLOW BLOCKS (CMU) 4"-$0.55/pc • 6"-$0.65/pc • 8"-$0.75/pc
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#3,#5,#8 REBAR-$738.00/BDL
GALVALUME ROOF TIN G26 FROM KOREA, BETTER QUALITY & RUST RESISTANCE
25%OFF FOR 2X8 UTILITY LUMBER REGULAR & TREATED
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OTHER CARS & TRUCKS								
U07-034T	2000	NISSAN MAXIMA GXE 4DR	AUTO	68648	WHITE	ACT-812	~~10,999~~	6,999
GM VAN								
GM6-027L	2006	CHEVY EXPRESS VAN 15-PAX	AUTO	106929	WHITE	BUS-1163	13,699	

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USDA eyes pilot study to increase availability of locally grown foods

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WASHINGTON—Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan recently announced a new pilot project under the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative for farmers to establish high tunnels—also known as hoop houses—to increase the availability of locally grown produce in a conservation-friendly way.

"There is great potential for high tunnels to expand the availability of healthy, locally-grown crops—a win for producers and consumers," said Merrigan.

ON THE NET

USDA YouTube channel:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07vtMJgp0no

"This pilot project is going to give us real-world information that farmers all over the country can use to decide if they want to add high tunnels to their operations. We know that these fixtures can help producers extend their growing season and hopefully add to their bottom line."

The three-year, 38-state study will verify if high tunnels are effective in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers.

Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain and move. High tunnels are used year-round in parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers—a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide financial assistance for the project through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the EQIP Organic Initiative, and the Agricultural Management Assistance program. NRCS will fund one high tunnel per farm. High tunnels in the study can cover as much as 5 percent of 1 acre.

Participating states and territories are Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Pacific Islands, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

To sign up or learn more about EQIP assistance for high tunnel projects, contact a local NRCS office. ***(USDA)***

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Quest S | 9N1037 SOLD | Silver | $4,000.00
Murano SL | 9W1006 SOLD | Silver | $4,000.00
FORD | STOCK # | Color | Discount
Ranger XL | 9PA13734 | White | $2,500.00
Fusion SE | 9R137166 | Smoke | $3,000.00
HONDA | STOCK # | Color | Discount
Fit Sport | 9S05442 SOLD | Silver | $3,000.00
Civic LX | 9L01545 SOLD | Blue | $3,000.00
Civic Hybrid | 9S007352 | Gray | $3,500.00
Accord LXP | 8A10311 SOLD | Gold | $4,000.00
Odyssey EX | 9B017464 | White | $4,000.00
KIA | STOCK # | Color | Discount
Sedona LX | 86235463 | White | $3,500.00
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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Humanities Council to host book discussion program

The NMI Council for the Humanities invites to public to attend a four-week book discussion program that will explore four classic American novels. The program, which runs from Jan. 18 to Feb. 12, 2010, will be facilitated by Dr. P.F. Kluge, writer-in residence at Kenyon College in Ohio.

Books to be discussed during the program include *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Old Man and the Sea*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Things They Carried*. One novel will be considered each week during three 90-minute sessions.

Individuals interested in attending this book discussion program are invited to contact Council staff at 235-4785 to reserve a seat. The program is limited to 100 participants who will be registered on a first come, first served basis. The venue and specific dates and times for sessions will be announced shortly. ***(PR)***

First aid training set

The American Red Cross will be conducting a first aid training on Dec. 29, 2009, Tuesday, from 6pm to 10pm. The training fee is $30 per person/per course. A participant's booklet, which costs $5, is required. For more information, call the NMI Chapter Office at 234-3459. ***(PR)***

MATHLETE

Congratulations goes to Sun Young (Susan) Kim, a sophomore at Grace Christian Academy for winning the gold in Algebra in the Math Court Regionals last December 11, 2009. She will be joining the team who will be competing in the US this coming June.

WELCOME HOME

Welcome home and happy holidays to Corporal Daniel "Sowm" Olkeriil Kaipat aka Sofang! Enjoy the holidays! We just want to thank you for protecting our freedom! May God bless you always and forever. We love you very much! Greetings come from Z-Boy, Zasha, Zavannah, Toby Justin, Zodeanna, Gretha Leigh, and Kaeana. Also from the Pagan Ville Crews Two Zero Pagan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

STOCKING DONATION

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Gov. Felix P. Camacho speaks at the annual stocking donation to the Department of Youth Affairs on Dec. 22, 2009. Every year since 2003, directors and deputy directors from government departments and agencies donate stuffed stockings to youth at the Department of Youth Affairs. This year, directors donated more than 60 stockings filled with personal hygiene products, snacks, and school supplies. Camacho shared a few words with the youth who later sung Christmas carols for the governor and several directors. The day ended with a luncheon.

Senator Luis P. Crisostimo "Angando"
& Staff
Felis Pasgua yan Anu Nuebo!!!
To my wonderful people of the Commonwealth, I send forth to your homes my personal greetings of Felis Pasgua yan Anu Nuebo. Let the spirit of the holidays be a reminder to all of us to come together in hope and appreciation for our families, friends, neighbors and visitors during this season.
Let us never forget to bestow our appreciation to the men and women of the armed forces and their families who sacrifice a great deal in order to help spread the principles of freedom and democracy throughout the world. I pray for their continued safety and safe return home.
I wish you and your loved ones many more blessings to come. I am indeed very grateful to you as your Senator and I will continue to work diligently towards your interest, first and foremost. God Bless us all for a prosperous 2010!

CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCE

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the Ukulele group Ukituki have their picture taken after a special Christmas performance at the DFS Galleria on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2009.

CAMPUS TOUR

Visiting students from the Institute of Moralogy in Japan tour the aquatic lab tanks at the Northern Marianas College. The six students and their instructor recently visited the college, where the students were engaged in a brief English language course. The group toured the campus visiting the academic departments, learning and research facilities, as well as the Student Center, where they were able to interact and converse with NMC students. The course and the campus tour were coordinated by NMC's Community Development Institute, a program under the division of Community Programs and Services.

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USCG: Make boating safety the gift this holiday season

HONOLULU—With the holiday season already here, the U.S. Coast Guard wishes to remind mariners that boating safety equipment can make great gifts for friends and loved ones who enjoy boating.

To enjoy a safe day on the water, the Coast Guard suggests that boaters file a float plan—simply letting a reliable loved one or friend know where you are going, when you are going to be back, and what kind of vessel you have. That person can call the Coast Guard if you don't return on time and save critical time during searches.

Also be aware of weather and water conditions; never boat or paddle alone. Be cautious—do not exceed your ability to handle your vessel; be constantly aware of other vessels in the immediate area.

Here are various safety items you can purchase to make your boating experience safer:

■ Personal flotation devices, or life vests, are highly recommended. Certain life jackets are designed to keep your head above water which permits proper breathing. To meet Coast Guard requirements, a boat must have a Coast Guard-approved Type I, II, III, or V life jacket for each person aboard.

■ Boats 16 feet and larger must have at least one Type IV throwable device as well. All states have regulations regarding life jacket wear by children. Adult-sized life jackets will not work for children, but special sizes for children are available.

■ To work correctly, a life jacket must be worn, fit snugly, and not allow the child's chin or ears to slip through. Life jackets should be tested for wear and buoyancy at least once each year. Waterlogged, faded, or leaky jackets should be discarded. Life jackets must be properly stowed. A life jacket—especially a snug-fitting flotation coat or deck-suit style—can help you survive in cold water.

■ The Coast Guard encourages coastal and off-shore recreational boaters as well as sea kayakers to carry a VHF marine radio—either a fixed system or handheld unit—and be familiar with its operation and radio procedures. The VHF radio, monitored on channel 16, is your gateway to communicating with the Coast Guard or other vessels in your area. It can be a life saver in a distress situation.

Another device the Coast Guard recommends when going out on the water is an EPIRB, or Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. The 406 MHz EPIRB is GPS enabled and automatically activated when it is removed from its bracket and gets wet. The battery it uses will offer 48 hours of operation. In the event of an emergency, an EPIRB signal can shorten the Coast Guard's response time, and get you to safety sooner.

■ The holidays afford people with plenty of opportunity to enjoy the waters. If you boat, commit to boating sober. According to Coast Guard statistics, many boating accidents can be attributed to alcohol. An intoxicated person in the water faces a double danger – being unaware of the onset of hypothermia and increased disorientation resulting from inner ear disturbances.

As with drinking and driving, boating while intoxicated is illegal. Both the Coast Guard and individual states enforce Boating Under the Influence laws and violators face substantial fines, losing their operator privileges, and jail time. The Coast Guard and state law enforcement agencies have concurrent jurisdiction, meaning they can both enforce BUI laws.

The Coast Guard strongly recommends that all boaters take a recreational boating safety course and obtain a vessel safety check. Even if you pay careful attention to safety, dangerous mechanical problems can crop up on the best-maintained boat. That's why the U.S. Coast Guard recommends all recreational boaters take advantage of the free vessel safety check program. Vessel safety checks are conducted by local Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotillas.

Boaters in distress may contact the Coast Guard in Honolulu, on VHF Channel 16 or 808-842-2600. Additional course information is also available through the BOAT/U.S. Foundation at 1-800-336-BOAT. For additional boating safety tips, boaters can access the Coast Guard's Boating Safety Web site at: http://uscgaux.org/ or www.uscgboating.org. ***(USCG)***

To the people of the CNMI,
on island and abroad,

Now that the political campaigns are over, I would like to take this opportunity and thank you all for your untiring support that you gave me and my family during this last election. As promised, I will do my very best to represent your concerns and interests in the Senate for the years to come.
Please be safe during this Special Holidays!

From My Family to Yours...

Merry Christmas and
A Happy New Year

Felis Pasqua Yan
Anu -Nuebo

God Bless!
Ralph DLG. Torres

GOLDEN GIRL

Happy 50th birthday to Susan Gaspar of Hafadai Beach Hotel who is celebrating her special day today. Greetings from your friends.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan:
Enactment of Public Law No. 111-84 Doubles Military Academy Openings Available to Students from the CNMI
Become an Officer – 4 Slots Available – Apply Now

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AND LEARN

U.S. Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan is accepting applications from students seeking a nomination to one of the four U.S. service academies: Air Force Academy, Military Academy, Naval Academy and Merchant Marine Academy for the class entering Fall 2010. These academies offer students a first-rate and entirely free college education and the opportunity to receive an officer's commission in the U.S. Armed Forces upon graduation.

Who Qualifies:

- U.S. citizens
- High school graduates
- Between 17 to 23 years old
- Unmarried
- No dependents

What You Need:

- A sound academic background
- The ability to pass a physical aptitude test
- High moral character
- Strong leadership potential

Join the growing number of Officers from the Mariana Islands. (L-R) U.S. Naval Academy Midshipman 3rd Class Jonathan Jake Castro Tenorio, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Paul Sablan Duenas and Ensign Jun Vicente Mihara Chong, Jr.

HOW TO APPLY

Application forms and information on how to apply can be found on Congressman Sablan's website – Sablan.house.gov. Students interested in applying for a nomination may also contact Sablan's office in Washington toll free at (877) 446-3465 or his district office in Saipan at 323-2647/8. Prospective nominees are strongly encouraged to submit their applications as soon as possible.

Paid for by official funds authorized by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Business

Americans increase spending, but not on new homes

WASHINGTON (AP)—Americans are starting to spend a bit more money, but not enough to power a strong economic recovery.

Consumer spending posted its second straight monthly increase in November, rising 0.5 percent, the government said Wednesday. But new homes clearly weren't on the shopping list. New home sales plunged unexpectedly to the lowest level since April.

The reports were evidence that the recovery from a deep recession is proceeding in fits and starts, with households struggling in a bleak job market. At the same time, economists said the economy was much improved from this time last year, when the nation was gripped by the financial crisis.

"People are continuing to pay down their debts, and they remain concerned about their financial futures and whether they will have jobs," said Sal Guatieri, an economist at BMO Capital Markets. "Santa's toy bag won't exactly be brimming with goodies this year, but at least he will show up, unlike last year."

Americans' income, meanwhile, ticked up at the fastest rate in six months last month, though the 0.4 percent increase was less than economists expected. That reflected a $16.1 billion increase in wages and salaries, helped by last month's drop in unemployment.

But consumers are still worried about job security, and that weighs on decisions about big purchases like new homes.

The 11 percent slump in new home sales from October's pace shows that consumers are taking their time following an extension of a deadline for first-time buyers to qualify for a tax credit. The incentive, worth up to $8,000, was set to expire at the end of November. But Congress pushed back the date to April 30 and expanded the program to include current homeowners who move.

The only strong region was the Midwest, where sales rose 21 percent. Sales fell by 21 percent in the South, 9 percent in the West and 3 percent in the Northeast.

And buyers are putting their dreams of palatial McMansions aside. Vince Napolitano, president of Napolitano Homes in Virginia Beach, Va., is hoping to sell 110 houses next year, up from fewer than 70 this year, by focusing on smaller homes that sell for $400,000 or less.

Luxury car buyers spending less for the holidays

DETROIT (AP)—This holiday season, the luxury car buyer is offering a simple phrase: I'm not spending too much.

Wealthier shoppers are trickling back into showrooms after staying away much of the year. But there's a catch. Many are pinching pennies, sort of, by choosing smaller BMW and Mercedes models, or they're buying top-of-the-line cars from cheaper brands.

This year, almost 14 percent of luxury buyers replaced old vehicles with brands other than traditional high-end names such as Audi, BMW, Cadillac, Infiniti, Jaguar, Lexus, Lincoln, Mercedes and Porsche. That's up from just 4 percent in 2006 and a reminder that these buyers still don't feel as wealthy as they once did. Home values are still down and portfolios shrunken, despite the stock market's gains this year.

Two potential beneficiaries of the shift are Buick and Hyundai, brands offering luxury models that are much cheaper than Beamers and Audis.

Tan Holdings and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas.
This year we join you in taking time to give thanks for the blessings of the year just passed, to rejoice in our children, and to enjoy the company of family and friends.
We look forward to working with our partners, organizations, and individuals in the new year of 2010.
On behalf of the management and employees of all our TanHoldings companies in the region,
Happy Holidays and a safe and prosperous New Year!
Tan Holdings
www.tanholdings.com
Tan Siu Lin Foundation

Citi repays $20 billion in TARP money

NEW YORK (AP)—Citigroup Inc. said Wednesday it has repaid the $20 billion in bailout money it received from the government.

Citi said it funded the previously announced repayment with a recent stock offering that raised $20.5 billion. The offering included $17 billion in common shares and $3.5 billion in what are called tangible equity units, which can be converted into common stock at a later date.

Citi said it also ended its $7.1 billion loss-sharing agreement with the government, which protected the company against defaults on some risky investments. To end the program, the government canceled $1.8 billion of what are called trust preferred securities, but still holds $5.3 billion in those securities, which are a type of debt instrument.

New York-based Citi was among the hundreds of banks that received bailout money through the Troubled Asset Relief Program. The Treasury Department extended a total of about $453 billion to banks, insurers, automakers and other companies under the program. The government has said it expects total bank repayments could reach $175 billion by the end of next year.

Repayment of the money frees banks from government restrictions, such as executive pay limitations.

Earlier Wednesday, Wells Fargo & Co. announced that it had repaid the $25 billion it received in bailout funds. The San Francisco-based bank said a public stock offering that raised $12.25 billion helped fund the repayment.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Chevron agrees to $45 million settlement

WASHINGTON (AP)—Chevron Corp. will pay $45.5 million to resolve claims that it underpaid natural gas royalties to the government and Native Americans, the Justice Department announced Wednesday. Most of the settlement money will be distributed to federal, state and American Indian accounts affected by the underpayments. More than $12.3 million of the amount will go to the heirs of the whistleblower who filed the lawsuit in Beaumont, Texas. Each month, companies are required to report to the Interior Department the value of the natural gas produced from their federal and Indian leases. A percentage of the reported value is paid as royalties. The settlement includes Chevron companies Texaco Inc., Unocal Corp. and other affiliates.

BlackBerry users beset by second outage in a week

TORONTO (AP)—When Corey Marshall's Blackberry mysteriously stopped sending and receiving messages, he realized all too clearly just how much he depends on the device: He had no way of contacting his friends because he never bothers to exchange phone numbers with anyone anymore. "A lot of the times if I meet someone and I see they have a BlackBerry, I don't even want their number or care. I just want their BBM," or their BlackBerry instant-messaging ID, said the 23-year-old tanning-salon manager and student. "I didn't even have my boss' number. I only contact him through BB." He added: "I go to sleep with it in my hands. It's the first thing I do when I wake up in the middle of the night. It's the first thing I do when I wake up in the morning."

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AAA Elephant Rice $24.99 50 LBS

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Chicken Leg Quarter LIMIT 2 $20.99 33 LBS. $15.99 22 LBS.

Pork Spareribs LIMIT 2 $15.99 20 LBS.

Baby Ribs LIMIT 2 $15.99 /CASE

Young Whole Chicken LIMIT 2 $33.99 30 LBS.

U.S. Eggs Extra Large $1.99 LIMIT 4 DOZ. /DOZ.

Turkey $1.99 1 LB.

Picnic Smoked Ham/ Gusto Smoked Ham $1.99 1 LB.

Crab $7.99 /LB.

Vega Shrimp $4.99 1 LB. LIMIT 6

Green Mussels $3.99 2 LB. LIMIT 1

Salad Oil $23.99 5 GALLON

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Chicken Wings $11.99 5 LBS.

Chicken Nuggets $10.99 5 LBS.

Ground Beef $9.99 5 LBS. $16.99 10 LBS.

Beef Rib Finger $2.99 /LB

Ground Pork $2.39 1 LB. $16.99 10 LBS.

Chopped Ham $8.99 5 LBS. $15.99 10 LBS.

Bar S Jumbo Franks $1.09 /PKG LIMIT 2

Bar S Bacon $2.49 /PKG.

Hoffy Portugese Sausage $1.99 /PKG.

Turkey Tail LIMIT 2 $15.99 20 LBS.

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Lamb Shoulder Roll $4.99 1 LB.

Beef Patties $3.99 3 LBS.

Pork Loin Boneless $2.99 1 LB.

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T-Bone Steak $3.99 /LB.

Beef Top Round Steak $14.99 FAMILY BAG

Mackerel Pike $20.99 22 LBS.

Tilapia 99¢ /LB $37.99 /CASE

Calamary Seawave $1.99 1 LB.

Milkfish $1.49 /LB..

Broccoli $1.99 /LB..

Lettuce $1.59 /LB..

Cabbage 79¢ /LB.

Onion 59¢ /LB.

Garlic (4 pcs.) 89¢ /PACK

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Banana 99¢ /LB.

Gala Apple Cello Fuji Apple Cello $3.99 PKG.

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Coco Saba $1.29 15 OZ.

Master A1 Tuna 99¢ LIMIT 6 CANS

Ace Diamond Tuna $1.19 LIMIT 6 CANS

Ligo Sardines 3 for $1.00

Century Tuna (All Flavors) 79¢ EACH

Hormel Chili No Beans $1.99

Ichiban $8.99 /BOX

Korean Bowl Noodle (Nong Shim) $7.99 /CASE

Knorr Carb & Corn Soup 60 g. $1.25

Chicken Noodle 99¢

Sugar 99¢ 1 KG. $1.79 2 KG.

Kikkoman $3.99 1.6 L LIMIT 6 BTL.

Kimchee Base $4.99 450G

Lemon Powder $4.99 /CASE

Flour / Rice Stick 99¢

Excellent Rice Stick 99¢ 8 OZ.

Chorizzos $25.99 LIMIT 1

Dragon Oil $6.99 1 GALLON

AVO Vegetable Oil $6.99 1 GALLON

Anchor Fresh Milk $15.99 /CASE

Real Fresh Milk 1 L $19.99 /CASE

Maseca Flour $3.99 5 LBS.

Hungarian Flour $2.75 5 LBS.

Kraft Real Mayo $9.99 1 GALLON

Maggi Magic Sarap Seasoning 12 Sachets/Pack $1.00 /PACK

Datu Puti Vinegar $2.99 1 GALLON

Silver Swan Soy Sauce $2.99 1 GALLON

Folgers Coffee $9.99 33.9 OZ.

Coffee Mix $6.99 LIMIT 1 100 STICKS

Vlassic Dill Pickles $5.99 WHOLE $6.99 SLICE

Seok Water $4.99 /CASE

Cool Aid $7.99 36 QTZ.

Sunkist Juice $5.99 /CASE

Chamorro Punch $8.99

Zesto Juice (All Flavor) $1.75 10 PCS./BOX

Assam Black Tea $8.99 /CASE

Hite / Max Beer WARM ONLY LIMIT 2 $14.99 /CASE

Budweiser/Bud Light Beer WARM ONLY LIMIT 2 $24.99 /CASE

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Tide Detergent $3.99 2.8 KG. $6.99 5 KG.

Gain Powder LIMIT 2 $15.99 120 LOADS

Gain Liquid Detergent (All Kind) 50 OZ. $4.99 LIMIT 2

Joy Dishwashing $5.99 90 OZ.

Axxion Foam Plates 125 CT $6.99 LIMIT 1

Diamond Aluminum Foil $6.99 200 SQ. FT.

Luv's Big Box (All Sizes) $17.99 3, 4, 5, 6

Safeguard 90 G 59¢

Bounty Paper Towel $18.99 15 ROLLS

Table Napkin $3.99 400 COUNT

Dawn Dishwashing $7.99 90 OZ.

Charmin Tissue $6.99 24 ROLLS

Toilet Tissue $2.99 10 ROLLS

FAMILY BAG

Pork Hocks	$8.99
Pork Belly	$10.99
Pork Adobo	$9.99
Pork Spareribs	$5.99
Pork Chops	$10.99
Beef Stew	$13.99
Beef Backribs	$7.99
Beef Shortribs	$13.99
Stewing Chicken	$6.99
Quarter Leg s	$5.99

Nation

Balloon boy parents are sent to jail for hoax

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP)—The parents who pulled the balloon boy hoax in hopes of landing a reality TV show were sentenced to jail Wednesday—90 days for him, 20 days for her—and barred from profiting from their newfound celebrity status for the next four years.

Choking back tears, Richard Heene apologized in court for the frenzy he caused when he claimed his 6-year-old son Falcon had floated away in a giant helium balloon shaped like a flying saucer.

"I'm very, very sorry. And I want to apologize to all the rescue workers out there, and the people that got involved in the community," said the 48-year-old Heene, a UFO-obsessed backyard scientist who turned to storm-chasing and reality TV after his Hollywood acting career bombed.

The sentencing was the culmination of a saga that transfixed the nation in October with the sight of the silvery balloon hurtling through the sky on live television. In the end, it was all a publicity stunt by a family broke and desperate for attention and money after networks kept rejecting their reality TV show pitches.

The case—along with the White House party-crashing by a Virginia couple last month—illustrated vividly the lengths people are willing to go to become TV stars in this 15-minutes-of-fame world.

AP

Richard and Mayumi Heene leave court after sentencing on Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2009, in Fort Collins, Colo., in connection with the "Balloon Boy" hoax.

"What this case is about is deception, exploitation—exploitation of the children of the Heenes, exploitation of the media and exploitation of people's emotions—and money," District Judge Stephen Schapanski said.

Heene's 90-day sentence includes 60 days of work release that will let him pursue his job as a construction contractor during the day as long as he reports back to jail at night. The Heenes were also put on four years' probation, during which they cannot earn any money related to the stunt. That means any book, movie or reality TV deals are off limits.

Richard Heene's wife, Mayumi Heene, 45, looked sullen and did not speak during the sentencing. Afterward, the Heenes walked past a crowd of reporters without comment.

Prosecutors asked for the 90-day maximum for the husband, saying that a stern message needs to be sent to people who stage hoaxes for the publicity.

Prosecutor Andrew Lewis also asked that the Heenes be forced to reimburse authorities for the full cost of chasing the balloon and investigating the hoax—an amount that could exceed $50,000. The exact sum will be determined later.

"People around the world were watching this unfold," Lewis said. "Mr. Heene wasted a lot of manpower and a lot of money in wanting to get himself some publicity."

He added, "Jay Leno said it best when he said, 'This is a copycat game.' And people will copycat this event." The Heenes "need to go to jail so people don't do that."

Health care measure on the brink of Senate's passage

WASHINGTON (AP)—Democrats pushed sweeping health care legislation to the brink of Senate passage Wednesday, crushing a year-end Republican filibuster against President Barack Obama's call to remake the nation's health care system.

The 60-39 vote marked the third time in as many days Democrats have posted a supermajority needed to advance the legislation. Final passage, set for about dawn on Thursday, was a certainty, and will clear the way for talks with the House on a final compromise. Those negotiations likely will stretch into February.

The Senate has met for 24 consecutive days to debate the legislation, the second-longest such stretch in history, and Democrats held a celebratory press conference.

"We stand on the doorstep of history," said Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, who painstakingly pieced together the bill—and the now-controversial deals with wavering lawmakers that made its passage possible.

The measure would extend coverage to an estimated 31 million who lack it, while banning the insurance industry from denying benefits or charging higher premiums on the basis of pre-existing medical conditions. The Congressional Budget Office predicts the bill will reduce deficits by $130 billion over the next 10 years, an estimate that assumes lawmakers carry through on hundreds of billions of dollars in planned cuts to insurance companies and doctors, hospitals and others who treat Medicare patients.

Winter storm moves across nation's midsection

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—Holiday travelers battled slick, icy roads and flight cancellations and delays on Wednesday as a major winter storm began to spread across much of the nation's midsection—and the worst of the weather was still expected to come.

The slow-moving storm was likely to intensify Thursday as it continued its trek north and east, bringing heavy snow, sleet and rain to a large swath of the Plains and the Midwest. A foot or two of snow was possible in some areas by Christmas Day.

"It's an unusually large storm, even for the Plains," said Scott Whitmore, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Topeka, Kan.

In northwest Kansas, snow started falling before sunrise Wednesday, after freezing rain had already iced up roads.

A stretch of Interstate 70 in western Kansas was snowpacked by mid-afternoon. The state Department of Transportation warned that travel would be almost impossible in northeast Kansas by Thursday afternoon.

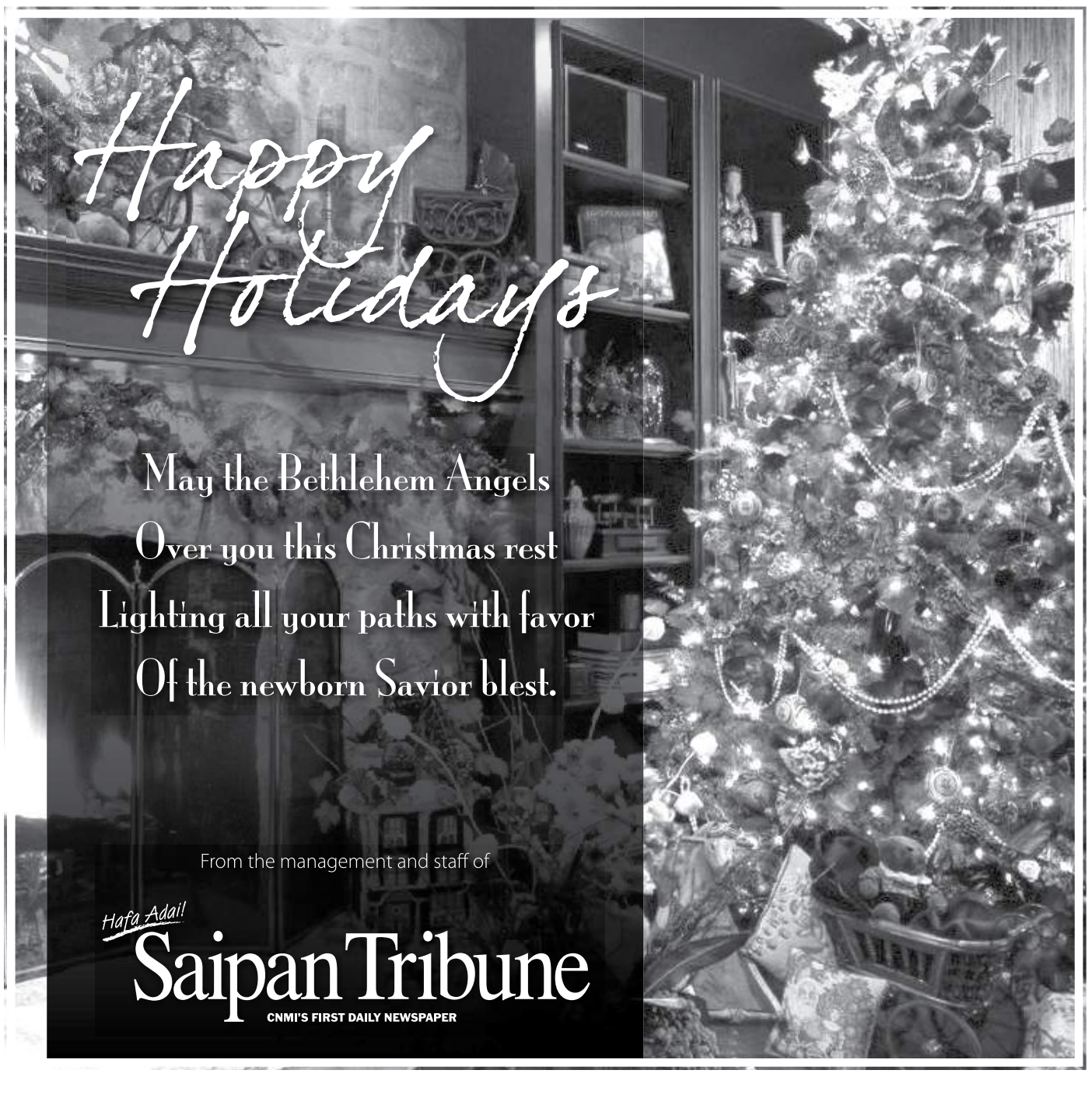
ACROSS THE NATION

Daylong Va. post office standoff ends peacefully

WYTHEVILLE, Va. (AP)—A daylong standoff at a small-town Virginia post office ended peacefully with three hostages being released and a suspect who came out of the building in a wheelchair in custody, police said late Wednesday. Warren Taylor of Sullivan County, Tenn., is being questioned and authorities do not yet have a motive, state police Sgt. Michael Conroy said. The hostages and suspect left the building in Wytheville after authorities ordered the man to surrender. The standoff began at about 2:30 p.m. when shots were fired at the one-story brick post office in the mountain town in western Virginia. No one was injured, and relatives of two of the hostages said they were able to talk to their loved ones by phone.

More than 100 could be victims of pediatrician

GEORGETOWN, Del. (AP)—A Delaware official said Wednesday there could be more than 100 potential victims of a pediatrician charged with sexually abusing patients, and authorities are offering counseling and seeking help from parents in the investigation. Slutsky, a deputy attorney general assigned to the state's Child Predator Task Force, said the volume of evidence seized from Dr. Earl Bradley's practice and home, including video tapes and computer files, makes it difficult to estimate the number of victims. "I'm comfortable in saying probably well over 100 potential victims," she said at a news conference with Attorney General Beau Biden and other law enforcement officials. Slutsky said the investigation is focusing on cases between 1998 and the present. Bradley, 56, was arrested last week and is being held in prison on $2.9 million bond. He has been charged with 33 felony counts relating to seven victim.


Happy Holidays
May the Bethlehem Angels
Over you this Christmas rest
Lighting all your paths with favor
Of the newborn Savior blest.
From the management and staff of
Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

World

2 vessels collide in Philippines; 27 missing

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Search-and-rescue teams combed the waters of Manila Bay on Thursday for at least 27 people missing after a passenger ferry collided with a fishing boat, the coast guard said.

Forty-six passengers and crew of the wooden-hulled ferry MV *Catalyn B* who were plucked alive from the water arrived before noon at the Manila headquarters of the coast guard, which alerted all vessels in the area to look for those still missing, said coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo.

A woman passenger was seen being carried on a stretcher, while others were led to a clinic for a medical examination.

The 44-foot (13-meter) long vessel, which was carrying 73 people on a journey from Manila to southwest Mindoro Island, sank shortly after the accident, Balilo said. The ferry had a capacity to carry 126 people and was not overloaded, he added.

All 22 crewmen of the fishing boat *Natalia* were safe, and their vessel did not sink after the collision off Cavite province's Limbones island, said Melvin Viola of the coast guard's operation center.

The cause of the collision at a time when millions of Filipinos were heading to their home provinces ahead of Christmas Eve was not clear. No weather disturbances were reported in the area.

Henry Tria, one of about 30 anxious relatives who flocked to the coast guard office, said five of his relatives were on board, including teenaged nephews and a 7-year-old niece who were on their way home to Mindoro.

"I told them that we should take a bigger ship but the tickets were sold out so they decided to go on this smaller ferry because they wanted to be home for Christmas," he said earlier Thursday, before the survivors arrived at the coast guard office.

Aide: Brazilian family giving up fight for US boy

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—David Goldman's bitter five-year battle to regain custody of his son neared conclusion Wednesday, when the child's Brazilian family halted its legal efforts as a court-ordered deadline for delivering the boy loomed.

Goldman has said repeatedly that until he is on a plane heading to the U.S. with 9-year-old Sean at his side, he would not feel relief. But with a court ordering the boy's handover Thursday morning at the U.S. Consulate, the end appeared to be in sight.

Goldman's fight against a powerful family of Rio de Janeiro lawyers—a David vs. Goliath matchup in a nation where the wealthy are used to coming out on top—shifted in recent months, legally and among ordinary Brazilians.

The case was once largely viewed through a nationalistic lens. But with Goldman's persistent fighting it has come to be seen on talk shows and in neighborhood bars as a dad simply trying to be with his son.

Which is how Goldman has always framed it.

"Sean is my family, Sean is my son. It is our right to be together, not just a rule of law, not just a treaty, not he's Brazilian, not he's American, not he's from anywhere. He's my son and I should be able to raise my son and he should know his dad," Goldman said this week.

Goldman, of Tinton Falls, N.J., won a big legal victory late Tuesday when Brazil's chief justice upheld a lower court's ruling that ordered Sean returned to him. Sean has lived in Brazil since Goldman's ex-wife, Bruna Bianchi, took him to her native country for what was supposed to be a two-week vacation in 2004. Last year she died in childbirth.

Bin Laden daughter hides in Saudi embassy in Iran

CAIRO (AP)—A daughter of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden has taken refuge in the Saudi Embassy in Tehran after eluding guards who have held her, her sister and four brothers under house arrest for eight years, a Saudi-owned newspaper reported Wednesday.

It has long been believed that Iran has held in custody a number of bin Laden's children since they fled Afghanistan following the U.S.-led invasion of that country in 2001—most notably Saad and Hamza bin Laden, who are thought to have held positions in al-Qaida.

This year, U.S. officials said Saad bin Laden may have been killed by a U.S. airstrike in Pakistan, where they said he may have fled after being freed from Iran, but they could not confirm the information.

But Omar bin Laden, another son who lives abroad, told the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper that Eman told relatives in a call from the embassy that 29-year-old Saad and four other brothers were still being held in Iran.

Attempts by The Associated Press to reach Omar were not immediately returned, and there was no comment from Iranian or Saudi officials.

Asharq Al-Awsat said the 17-year-old daughter, Eman, slipped away from guards and fled to the Saudi Embassy nearly a month ago. The embassy's charge d'affaires, Fouad al-Qassas, confirmed to the paper that she has been at the mission for 25 days and that there were diplomatic efforts with the Iranians to get her out of the country.

Another bin Laden son, Abdullah, who lives in Saudi Arabia, told the Arab TV news network Al-Jazeera in an interview aired this week that Eman telephoned him after she eluded guards who were taking her on a shopping trip in Tehran.

Osama bin Laden reportedly has 19 children by several wives. He took at least one of his wives and their children with him to Afghanistan in the late 1990s after he was thrown out of his previous refuge, Sudan. They fled when the U.S-led war erupted, including the group that tried to escape through Iran.

WORLD BRIEFS

Diplomats shut out of Chinese dissident's trial

BEIJING (AP)—A high-profile Chinese dissident accused of subversion was tried at a two-hour hearing Wednesday that shut out foreign diplomats concerned over a case that reflects the communist government's deep suspicion of calls for political reform. Liu Xiaobo was detained a year ago, just before the release of an unusually direct appeal for more civil rights in China he co-authored called Charter 08, signed by scores of China's top intellectuals. He faces up to 15 years in jail. The verdict is due Friday. International human rights groups and Western nations have heavily criticized Liu's detention. A dozen diplomats, including from the United States, Britain, Germany, Australia and Canada, stood outside the Beijing courthouse in freezing weather, barred from entering, along with a handful of Liu's Chinese supporters. At least one diplomat said he would try to be present for the verdict.

Filipino troops try to keep volcano evacuees safe

LEGAZPI, Philippines (AP)—Police and soldiers donned Santa hats and red clown noses and belted out songs in crammed evacuation centers in hopes of keeping 47,000 displaced residents from sneaking back to their homes on the slopes of a lava-spilling volcano. Despite the risk of an imminent explosive eruption of the 8,070-foot (2,460-meter) Mayon, which has been oozing lava and blasting ash for a week, some residents weary of temporary shelters are conspiring to go back to their abandoned villages for traditional Christmas Eve family gatherings. Others want to retrieve their livestock or harvest crops.

"We are not used to spending Christmas in the evacuation center," said Ramon Ayala, 48, whose home lies within a five-mile (eight-kilometer) zone around Mayon that authorities emptied last week when the volcano started rumbling. "We and many others plan to spend Christmas Eve in our homes," Ayala said. Authorities are determined to make sure it does not happen.

Police, protesters clash in southern Iran

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Security forces and hard-line militiamen assaulted opposition protesters, beating men and women and firing tear gas, as thousands gathered in a central Iranian city for a memorial commemorating the country's most senior dissident cleric, who died this week. The government's crackdown showed signs of moving for the first time against clerics who support the opposition: Basij militiamen surrounded the house and office of two prominent religious figures, shouting slogans and breaking windows, opposition Web sites reported. The death on Sunday of the 87-year-old Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a sharp critic of Iran's leaders, gave a new push to opposition protests, which have endured despite a heavy security crackdown since disputed presidential elections in June.

INVITATION FOR BIDS
WATER TASK FORCE
IFB10-GOV- 004

Governor Benigno R. Fitial, through the CNMI Water Task Force, are soliciting sealed bids for the **CENTRAL GARAPAN WATERLINE REPLACEMENT** in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

A bid guarantee of 15 percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of the Treasury (T-Listed).

The bidder is required to submit with his proposal a copy of his CNMI Business License in compliance with the Contractor's Registration and Licensing Laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Contractor will be required to submit payment and performance bonds from a US Treasury listed company. The Contractor will also be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal laws including the Davis Bacon Act.

This project is funded by a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Commerce and the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA), Department of the Interior. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the project approval from EDA and OIA.

The project consists, in general, but is not limited to:

- Replace 50 service laterals and 16 water meters, with 65 water meters relocations.
- Install gate valves, fittings, for new 9 fire hydrants and connections to existing water mains at various locations.
- Install 3,130 linear feet of 8-inch PVC distribution pipe and 2,800 linear feet of 6-inch PVC distribution pipe.
- Abandon in-place of old asbestos cement pipe (ACP).
- Restore disturbed asphalt paving, concrete curbs and gutters.
- Conduct the area topographic and easement surveys.
- Construction activity to not interrupt existing water service to the area.

A non-refundable payment of $500 to CNMI Treasury is required for each set of Plans, Specifications, and Proposal Forms, available on or after **December 4, 2009** at the Water Task Force Office, 1316 Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan. A mandatory pre-bid conference for this project is scheduled at **10:00 a.m.**, on **December 18, 2009**, at the WTF Conference Room, Saipan. A project site visit will be made as a part of the pre-bid meeting.

All inquiries shall be in writing and addressed to Pedro Sasamoto, Program Manager, Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950 or faxed to (670) 664-2279. Inquiries must be received no later than 4:30 PM on **December 17, 2009.**

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, contained in the CNMI Administrative Code, Title 70 Subchapter 70-30.3. Preference is not available to local bidders in this procurement because its use is prohibited by the Federal law granting the funds for this project.

Sealed bids must be marked **"IFB10-GOV-004"**. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, no later than 3:00 pm local time **January 4, 2010**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to bid. Notices of Intent to bid must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 3:00 pm local time January 4, 2010, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **January 4, 2010**, and must be received no later than **January 18, 2010.** Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly open and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at 3:00 pm local time, **January 19, 2010.** However, if no Notices of Intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at 3:00 pm local time on **January 5, 2010.**

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

/s/ Benigno R. Fitial
Governor and Contracting Officer

/s/ Herman S. Sablan
Director, Procurement and Supply

Off The Wall

Swedish Christmas straw goat burns again

STOCKHOLM (AP)—A giant straw goat was burned down yet again early Wednesday in a Swedish city where torching it has become a Christmas tradition, to the dismay of local leaders.

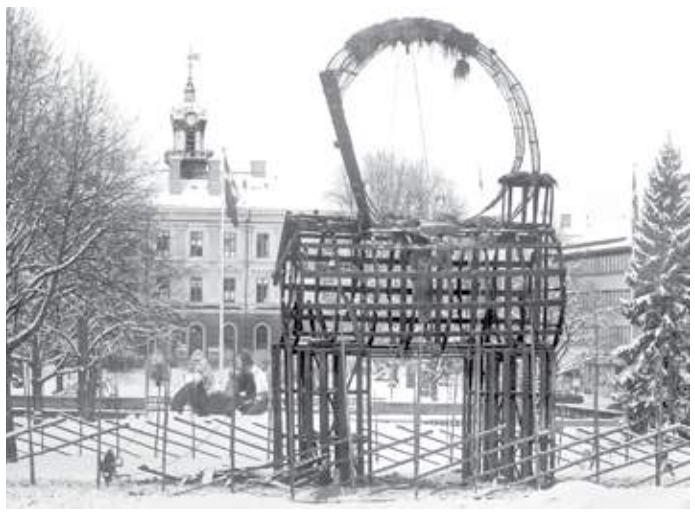
Gavle city spokeswoman Anna Ostman said someone set fire to the 43-foot-high (13-meter-high) creature around 3 a.m. local time. Only a charred wooden skeleton of the traditional Swedish Christmas symbol remained on Wednesday morning.

"It feels very sad," Ostman said. "We had really hoped that he would survive Christmas and New Year's.

Vandals have burned down the goat 24 times since it was first set up in Gavle in 1966 to mark the holiday season. It has also been smashed several times, run over by a car and had its legs cut off.

In 2006 and 2007 city officials doused it in fireproofing chemicals. Ostman said they stopped doing that because it discolored the goat, making it "look like a brown terrier instead of a yellow straw goat."

The goat is a centuries-old Scandinavian Yule symbol that preceded Santa Claus as the bringer of gifts to Swedish homes. Many Swedes place a small straw goat underneath their Christmas trees, or hang miniature versions on the branches.



AP

The charred remains of a Christmas straw goat stands in the town center of Gavle, Northern Sweden, on Wednesday Dec. 23, 2009.

While city officials are always quick to condemn the vandals who set the goats ablaze, they have also become increasingly aware of the international attention the near-yearly attacks draw to Gavle, about 90 miles (150 kilometers) north of Stockholm.

This year the city Web site offers users a chance to follow the goat's fate via a Webcam, Twitter page and a blog—in both Swedish and English.

"So sad that I can't celebrate Christmas with you all, but thank you so much for now, dear friends," the blog said Wednesday. "I'm going on holiday now to get some rest—but will of course be back for next Christmas."

Texas parents battle school over son's long locks

BALCH SPRINGS, Texas (AP)—Pre-kindergartner Taylor Pugh likes his floppy hair just how it is: long on the front and sides, covering his earlobes and shirt collar.

But his long locks violate the dress code in his suburban Dallas school district. So Taylor again Wednesday found himself facing in-school suspension, sitting in a library with a teacher's aide while his friends played and learned together in a classroom.

"They kicked me out that place," said Taylor, 4, who prefers the nickname Tater Tot. "I miss my friends."

Taylor's parents say he plans to eventually cut his hair and donate it to a charity that makes wigs for cancer patients. But they're not happy with the district's rules.

It appears the school district "is more concerned about his hair than his education," said Taylor's father, Delton Pugh. "I don't think it's right to hold a child down and force him to do something ... when it's not hurting him or affecting his education."

Pugh, a tattoo artist, said he used to shave his own head but that his son "made me pinky promise I would let my hair grow long with him."

The follicle fight came to a head last month when Taylor's parents received a signed letter from Floyd Elementary School's principal, threatening to withdraw the boy from school if his hair didn't comply with district standards.

Ohio mom calls cops on her shoplifting 6-year-old

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—An Ohio woman who asked that police be called after she caught her 6-year-old daughter shoplifting a package of stickers said Wednesday that she was just trying to teach the girl a lesson early in life.

Diane Lyons said she doesn't believe she overreacted when she discovered the girl, Shiane, had taken the $3.11 package of stickers used to make temporary tattoos. Lyons' 10-year-old daughter told her about the theft.

Chief Ronald Yeager of the Carrollton Police Department in eastern Ohio arrived at the Discount Drug Mart Dec. 15 and took the girl to the police station in his cruiser before releasing her to Lyons, according to Yeager's report.

Yeager told Lyons the girl sat quietly in the car on the way to the police. A phone message was left with Yeager on Wednesday.

"I don't think I went too far," Lyons said in a phone interview. "You've got to catch them when they first start if they do something wrong."

Lyons, 31, asked about collecting a $30 reward for turning in shoplifters but decided not to follow up because she felt bad about doing it.

"People think that I set her up or something to get the reward," Lyons said.

Lyons said she's seen parents give children a light spanking in similar situations but felt that wasn't enough in Shiane's case. She's confident the girl learned her lesson.

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Police stop generous Ind. 5th-grader with $10,000

SELMA, Ind. (AP)—Police say a fifth-grader handed out about $300 to others on the bus ride to his eastern Indiana school. Problem is, they say, the cash was among some $10,000 he took from his grandparents' safe. Delaware County Sheriff George Sheridan says the boy was riding the bus to Selma Elementary School when he handed out the money on Friday, the last school day before Christmas vacation began. Children who received the ones, fives and twenties told teachers and the principal, and the sheriff's department was called. Officers found the boy carrying the rest of the cash, which was returned to his grandparents. Police weren't certain what he intended to do with the money or how he got it from the safe.

Hey, you with the firebomb! Wrong house!

THOMSON, Ga. (AP)—An east Georgia man trying to get revenge on his estranged girlfriend by firebombing her home was being held without bond after he threw the device into the wrong house. Authorities said a 25-year-old man was charged with arson, aggravated assault and possession of an explosive device—all felonies. The Augusta Chronicle reported Tuesday he was being held in the McDuffie County jail. Authorities said no one was injured Sunday night when the man allegedly tossed the Molotov cocktail through the front window of a Thomson home just before 9 p.m. Police arrested the man soon after the incident. Authorities said the man has been arrested on a variety of charges in recent months, though no further details were given.

Police: Man uses hatchet on vehicle in rage case

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP)—Maryland State police have arrested a man they say struck a vehicle with a hatchet in what they called a road rage incident. It happened Tuesday about 3:15 on I-495, the Capital Beltway, near Md. Route 97 in Rockville. Troopers received calls from motorists saying someone had gotten out of his car and was hitting another vehicle several times with a hatchet. The suspect left the scene and was followed by witnesses, who gave the vehicle information to authorities. The suspect was stopped, and troopers said they found a hatchet under the seat of his car. A man, 26, was arrested and charged with second-degree assault, malicious destruction of property and other offenses.

Cat finds way home after 11 days, 2 broken legs

SPRING HILL, Fla. (AP)–Down two legs, and who knows how many lives, a Florida cat missing 11 days somehow arrived home. Tracie Steger lost hope after search parties and fliers failed to turn up her beloved Giggle-Blizzard. She winced after hearing a car had hit a kitty, and raced to scare off a vulture with a suspicious whisker in its teeth. Neither was him. But on Thanksgiving night, a yelp from the porch was. A car had smashed his back legs a week ago, but Giggle-Blizzard somehow got back. He knew the area from walking unleashed with Steger's seven other cats and two dogs. After two operations he's back in Steger's menagerie, sporting Christmas-colored splints. It cost $3,000, but Steger can't contain her joy.

Woman calls 911 when husband refuses to eat dinner

KERRVILLE, Texas (AP)—Prosecutors will review the case of a woman authorities claim has called 911 30 times over six months for non-emergency reasons, including a call to complain that her husband refused to eat his dinner. Last Friday, the woman allegedly made a pair of calls to 911, including a hang-up and another where a woman was heard screaming. Police were dispatched to the residence and officer Paul Gonzales said police were told by her that "her husband did not want to eat his supper." A police report said the 53-year-old woman was also yelling "about things that happened two weeks ago." The woman now faces charges of 911 abuse.

Regular Meeting of the Board of Regents
Board of Regents Conference room, NMC - Saipan Campus
Wednesday, December 30, 2009
3:30pm

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
a. Roll Call
b. Review and Adoption of Agenda
c. Election of Officers
d. Review and Adoption of Minutes
1. September 24, 2009 – Regular meeting
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. REPORTS
a. Associated Students of NMC
b. Staff Senate
c. Faculty Senate
d. President
1. CFAO Financial Report
e. BOR Standing Committees
1. Fiscal Committee
a. Procurement Policy Revision
b. Board Resolution No. 2009 -05: To designate the President and CFAO to be signatories to bank accounts.
2. Personnel Committee
a. HR Policy Revision
3. Program Committee
a. Proposed Fiscal Year 2011 Budget and Substantive Change Proposal for Rehabilitation and Human Services Program
4. Legislative Committee
IV. OLD BUSINESS
a. WASC Accreditation Update
V. EXECUTIVE SESSION
(At any time during the scheduled meeting the Board of Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential)
VI. ADJOURNMENT

/s/Dr. Carmen Fernandez — December 25, 2009
Executive Secretary, BOR — Date

ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION (RCGC)
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 1547 ROTA, MP 96951

PURSUANT TO THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION, DIEGO M. SONGAO HEREBY ANNOUNCES THAT THE ROTA CASINO GAMING COMMISSION'S REGULAR MEETING FOR MONDAY, 28 DECEMBER 2009.

DATE: Monday, 28 December 2009
TIME: 2:00 PM
LOCATION: Rota Casino Gaming Commission's Office
Tatachog, Rota, MP 96951

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Adoption of Agenda
IV. Adoption of Minutes
V. Chairman's Report

VI. Old Business
-Application of RTIC
-Application for Temporary Casino License
-Employment Application for RCGC Staff
-RCGC Loan

VII. New Business
VIII. Miscellaneous
IX. Adjournment

*At anytime during the meeting, the Commission may move to Executive Session.

/s/ DIEGO M. SONGAO — 23, December 2009
Chairman

Science & Technology

Slick accessories for the gaming cave

By RON HARRIS
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

ATLANTA (AP)—You've got the new gaming PC, a wide, flat-screen display and all the energy drinks you'll need to get you through an online session of the futuristic first-person shooter game, "Red Faction: Guerrilla."

But if you're still using the same $20 keyboard and mouse combo you've had for six years, you're missing out.

Here are some of the top PC gaming peripherals to consider:

■ Logitech Gaming Mouse G500 ($70). This is the best mouse I've ever used for gaming, hands down. It has on-the-fly sensitivity adjustment buttons along the upper left edge, allowing you to change your character's swiveling response movements.

With an on-board memory chip, you can take keyboard settings with you as you move from computer to computer. These chips essentially store programming instructions so that certain keys will do certain things in specific games.

Best of all, the G500 allows you to fine-tune the weight of the mouse. It comes with a canister of small weights that you slip into a tray that goes into the base of the mouse. That way you can have the perfectly weighted mouse for your wrist and finger strength, thereby reducing fatigue. Worked for me.

■ Plantronics Gamecom777 headset ($110). This headset is nicely padded, is comfortable and delivers Dolby 5.1 surround sound when used with its USB adapter. While playing "Crysis: Warhead," the rumble of the tanks was ominous and rich. The pings of bullets as they ricocheted off objects near the feet of my on-screen character had the feel of direction and proximity. The headset comes with a microphone and powerful speakers, bringing gaming to life.

■ Saitek Cyborg Keyboard ($80). This keyboard is ready and willing to be your command center during complex PC gaming session. It has 12 programmable macro keys—those special keys that instruct specific games to do certain things—and features metal plating to give extra longevity for the keys used most in PC gaming: W, A, S, D, the space bar and arrows keys.

The Cyborg even allows you to change the illumination color and brightness of the glow underneath the keys, giving the playing surface a highly customized theme and feel. It's a smart choice that stands apart from the many gaming keyboards out there.

HELP FILE

By ROB PEGORARO
(C) 2009, THE WASHINGTON POST

Q: My iPhone's touchscreen doesn't work when I wear my gloves. Do I have any options to frozen fingers?

A: The screens on iPhones and other smartphones, like the click-wheel controls on iPods, use a capacitive design that relies on your fingertip's ability to conduct electricity.

Regular gloves interrupt that circuit, so you'd either need a pair that lets you temporarily expose a fingertip or a set that incorporates conductive material.

Gloves by Freehands ($18 and up at freehands.com) represents the first category. The ends of each glove's index finger and thumb flip open, then magnetically attach to the nearest knuckle. That allows the same control as with bare hands, at the cost of cold fingertips.

Two more expensive and effective gloves have silvery conductive fabric sewn into the tips of the forefingers and thumbs.

Echo Touch's sport glove ($30 but out of stock at echodesign.com, though a non-sport variety was available at that price Friday) kept my hand warm, but their somewhat loose fit made it tricky to select smaller onscreen items.

North Face's E-Tip men's gloves ($40) have a more snug fit that allows finer control. But the stylized circuit-board pattern across each palm and the power-on symbol adorning each thumb give them a Borg Nouveau look that some might see as a turnoff.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q: Comcast raised its modem-rental charge to $5. Is it worthwhile to buy my own modem?

A: Sure. Cable modems start at around $60 in stores, and you can probably beat those prices online. Just make sure whatever you buy appears on Comcast's list of approved modems (customer.comcast.com). One listed as "DOCSIS 3.0" compatible will support faster speeds that Comcast is now deploying.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q: My laptop's cursor jumps around — sometimes up a line, sometimes back several characters. Please make it stop.

A: I recently suffered through this experience on a review laptop, and I can't think of a more maddening malfunction — I was sorely tempted to take a baseball bat to the thing.

Instead, I tried disabling its touchpad's "tap to click" option, in which it treats any tap as a mouse click, on the theory that it was being too sensitive. That worked, and other users have since endorsed this fix.

But since Windows doesn't offer a standard control for this, you'll have to puzzle it out yourself in the "Mouse Properties" control panel (in Windows XP, it's under the Control Panel's "Printers and Other Hardware" category; in Windows Vista and 7, type "Mouse" in the Control Panel's search box). Click each tab in that window after the core Windows options ("Buttons," "Pointers," "Pointer Options," "Wheel" and "Hardware"), and one of them *should* have an option to disable this tapping option.

Updating touchpad drivers or adjusting the "Touch Sensitivity" option on some laptops may also fix this problem, but disabling tap-to-click is simpler.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q: I see a "6-cell battery" upgrade option on this laptop I'm considering. Should I get it?

A: In general, more cells—the little cylindrical or rectangular modules inside a laptop battery—are better, but you can be sure of that only when comparing different options on a single laptop. They're not as valid when comparing different computers, just as processor clock speeds say little about the relative performance of different lines of chips.

Usually, a PC vendor's middle battery option—neither small and underpowered, nor bulky and heavy—is the right call.

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Sherlock Holmes
Friday & Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:05 9:55
Sun through Thurs 1:05 4:05 7:05
Robert Downey, Jr., Jude Law
Action, Mystery • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous super-sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, gets an update with this adaptation of Lionel Wigram's comic book series by writer/director Guy Ritchie (RocknRolla) starring Robert Downey Jr. as the titular detective, with Jude Law stepping into the shoes of his sidekick, Dr. Watson. Heading up the rest of the cast are RocknRolla's Mark Strong as the film's villain, Blackwood, and Rachel McAdams portraying the love interest, Irene Adler.

It's Complicated
Friday & Saturday 1:30 4:20 7:10 9:40
Sun through Thurs 1:30 4:20 7:10
Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin
Comedy • Rated R
Synopsis
Veteran writer/director Nancy Meyers (Something's Gotta Give, What Women Want) returns to familiar romantic comedy territory with this untitled production for Universal Pictures starring Meryl Streep as a woman who finds herself caught in the middle of dual romantic advances from two suitors (played by Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin).

Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Sqeakquel
Friday & Saturday 1:15 4:15 7:25 9:30
Sun through Thurs 1:15 4:15 7:25
Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler
Children, Family • Rated PG
Synopsis
The lovable singing-and-dancing trio of famous marmots continues their big-screen hijinks with this follow-up to the 20th Century Fox smash-hit live-action/CG family comedy, this time incorporating a female version of the group entitled the Chipettes. Dr. Dolittle's Betty Thomas helms with Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler, and Jesse McCartney returning as the voices of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore.

Avatar
Friday & Saturday 12:15 3:30 6:45 10:00
Sun through Thurs 12:15 3:30 6:45
Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana
Science Fiction • Rated PG 13

Did You Hear About The Morgans?
Friday & Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:30 9:50
Sun through Thurs 1:20 4:10 7:30
Hugh Grant, Sarah Jessica Parker
Comedy • Rated PG 13

The Princess And The Frog
Friday & Saturday 1:10 4:30 7:20 9:35
Sun through Thurs 1:10 4:30 7:20
Anika Noni Rose, John Goodman
Comedy, Family • Rated G

Twilight Saga: New Moon
Friday & Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:45
Sun through Thurs 1:00 4:00 7:00
Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart
Thriller, Romance • Rated PG 13
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Life & Style

A sexy Dr. Watson? Jude Law says it's elementary

LONDON (AP)—Poor Dr. Watson. Always the sidekick, never the star.

Jude Law hopes to rectify that situation with his charismatic performance alongside Robert Downey Jr. in "Sherlock Holmes," making the detective's right-hand-man a handsome action hero in his own right. He's just not that comfortable with his new nickname: "Hotson."

"Mostly I was only hot because I was wearing those thick tweed suits, massive overcoats and hat and gloves," Law said, deflecting the accolade. "I was always the one perspiring on set."

Actor Jude Law attends the premiere of "Sherlock Holmes" at Lincoln Center in New York, on Thursday, Dec. 17, 2009.

AP

Law stresses that the film's version of Watson—a dapper army veteran with an eye for the ladies—is firmly based on the 19th-century stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Director Guy Ritchie wanted to give the tales a 21st-century spin while staying close to the original material.

"There's a reference in one of the books to Watson being very popular with women," Law said. "So that fits."

Far from being the bumbler familiar from classic Holmes movies, Watson is a foil and an equal for the detective, and their bickering relationship gives the film a big dose of buddy comedy.

"As soon as I knew Guy and Robert were involved, it was clearly going to be a reevaluation of a very familiar duo dynamic," said Law, cheerful and relaxed in an interview to promote the movie, which opens around the world this week.

"We were much more interested in creating this equal of two halves, both flawed and both trying to put up with living with each other and both sort of adoring each other but also hating each other."

Law, 36, has had an eventful 2009, in which he played a critically praised "Hamlet" in London's West End and on Broadway. He was also in the news for fathering a child during a brief relationship with model Samantha Burke.

Law said he was still "slightly shell-shocked" after eight months of "Hamlet," "of the most remarkable experiences in my life."

Meeting Broadway theatergoers reminded him that interacting with the public can be a pleasure. Avoiding the paparazzi is more of a chore. But he says he doesn't let it stop him.

"You just live accordingly," Law said. "You learn back routes to an awful lot of places. The glamour is going in through the kitchen and over the back fence."

James Cameron: China should let more movies in

BEIJING (AP)—Hollywood director James Cameron urged China to open its doors to more foreign films, arguing it would boost the local cinema industry after the WTO ruled Beijing was illegally restricting movie and other media imports.

In Beijing to promote his latest sci-fi extravaganza, "Avatar," Cameron said Wednesday that China's breakneck economic growth meant it no longer needed measures to protect its film industry.

"China's economy is expanding very, very rapidly. And I think the feeling right now is that perhaps it doesn't need to be protecting itself quite as much," Cameron, the director of blockbusters that include "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" and "Titanic," told reporters. "Chinese filmmakers are very strong ... they're highly respected."

The Chinese government protects local films by limiting the number of film imports on a revenue-sharing basis to 20 a year, a quota that effectively limits Hollywood blockbusters to 20 slots annually.

These and other restrictions have been a key complaint by Western countries, who say that China's rapid rise as a trade power has been in part aided by unfair policies that boost sales of Chinese goods abroad while limiting imports into its market.

"I think that by opening the doors in China to other filmmakers, it will raise the entire film industry in China," Cameron said. "It will get people more excited, there will be more seats, more cinemas, more excitement about the cinema-going experience, which will also raise the Chinese filmmakers' ability to play their films."

On Monday, a World Trade Organization panel upheld a ruling in a case brought by the U.S. government that China was obstructing trade by forcing foreign suppliers to distribute movies, music and books through state-owned companies.

China expressed disappointment at the decision but gave no immediate sign whether it could keep trying to defend the controls.

The WTO case focused on complaints by groups representing music labels such as EMI and Sony Music Entertainment, publishers including McGraw Hill and Simon & Schuster and Hollywood studios Warner Bros., Disney, Paramount, Universal and 20th Century Fox. The groups say the Chinese rules cost them tens of millions of dollars each year in lost business opportunities.

China's box office is booming, but still comparatively small compared to the U.S. market. Government statistics show that revenues surged from 920 million yuan in 2003 to 4.3 billion yuan ($630 million) in 2008—compared to $9.8 billion in the U.S. last year.

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In Loving Memory of

Ellen Ebreo Castro

We would like to invite all relatives and friends to join us in prayers as we commemorate the First Death Anniversary of our dearly beloved wife and mother.

Daily Mass will be offered at the San Antonio Church

Friday, December 25, 2009	8:00am
Saturday, December 26, 2009	6:00pm
Sunday, December 27, 2009	9:00am
Monday, December 28, 2009	6:00pm
Tuesday, December 29, 2009	6:00pm
Wednesday, December 30, 2009	6:00pm
Thursday, December 31, 2009	6:30pm
Friday, January 1, 2010	8:00am

The Eucharistic Celebration on the final day, **Saturday, January 2, 2010, will be at 6pm, at San Antonio Church.** Please join us for dinner after the final mass at our family's residence in Koblerville.

Your presence and prayers will be greatly appreciated

Si Yu'us Ma'ase

From: John I. Castro, Jr. & Children, and the Castro and Ebreo families

Billy Ray Cyrus becomes his dad in Hallmark movie

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Billy Ray Cyrus has been preparing his whole life for the role of Daniel Burton in the Hallmark Channel movie "Christmas in Canaan."

"I started digging through like old boxes of stuff and finding old Polaroids of my dad from 1964," he said. "I thought, if I can become my dad—if I can be Ronald Ray Cyrus in 1964—then that's this guy. Just go be your dad."

Cyrus even cut his hair to look like his dad.

"I realized I just grew into my dad to be honest," he said.

Cyrus plays a widowed father of three, living in Canaan, Texas, at the start of the Civil Rights Movement.

The script inspired Cyrus to write and record a song for the film. The song title, "We'll Get By Somehow (We Always Do)," is something his character, Daniel, says four times in the movie. Cyrus acknowledges that the lyrics also reflect his own life, as he deals with criticism of his parenting from the media.

"I write about what is real. I write about what I'm living. 'We'll get by somehow, we always do.' That's not only Daniel's mantra, that is my mantra," he said.

"The second you realize that life ain't fair, you're one step closer to moving on," he adds. "But most importantly, have a vision of where you want to go and who you want to be, and no matter what the naysayers say, or no matter the negativity, you stay focused."

Cyrus got the idea for the song on his tour bus when he heard a guitarist strumming a Texas-sounding tune.

"As I got my guitar out of the case, he was playing that lick, I just started singing 'We'll get by somehow, we always do. That's what makes a hope turn into truth. When the chips are down, we'll see it through. We'll get by somehow, oh yeah, we always do.'"

By the time he had his guitar in hand, the chorus was born.

BEST SELLERS

(c) 2009 Los Angeles Times

NONFICTION

1. ***Stones Into Schools***, by Greg Mortenson (Viking : $26.95) The author's continued struggle to establish schools for girls in Afghanistan in this sequel to Three Cups of Tea.
2. ***Open***, by Andre Agassi (Knopf: $28.95) The tennis star's memoir and personal odyssey of a lost childhood, drug use and comebacks.
3. ***What the Dog Saw***, by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown: $27.99) A collection of the author's writings of everyday and extraordinary people.
4. ***Guinness World Records 2010***, by Guinness World Records (Guinness: $28.95) Bizarre and unfathomable feats from the first decade of the 21st century.
5. ***Have a Little Faith***, by Mitch Albom (Hyperion: $23.99) Albom's observations of a rabbi and a pastor on an eight-year journey of faith.
6. ***Going Rogue***, by Sarah Palin (HarperCollins: $28.99) A memoir of the 2008 vice-presidential nominee and former Alaska governor.
7. ***Bicycle Diaries***, by David Byrne (Viking: $25.95) A journal of the former Talking Heads lead singer and avid bicyclist's trek across major cities around the globe.
8. ***I Used to Know That***, by Caroline Taggart (Readers Digest: $14.95) A collection of forgotten fun facts we learned in school.
9. ***Last Words***, by George Carlin with Tony Hendra (Free Press: $26.99) Memoir of the acerbic comedian's 50-year career filled with triumphs, substance abuse and setbacks.
10. ***Manhood for Amateurs***, by Michael Chabon (Harper: $26.99) A collection of autobiographical essays reflecting on what it means to be a man and father.

FICTION

1. ***U Is for Undertow***, by Sue Grafton (Putnam: $27.95) PI Kinsey Millhone investigates the 20-year-old case of the mysterious disappearance of a 4-year-old girl.
2. ***Too Much Happiness***, by Alice Munro (Knopf : $25.95) The short-story master explores women and their relationships in 10 new stories.
3. ***The Help***, by Kathryn Stockett (Putnam: $24.95) The lives of a maid, a cook and a college graduate become intertwined as they change a Mississippi town.
4. ***Hollywood Moon***, by Joseph Wambaugh (Little, Brown: $26.99) The third Hollywood station novel follows the daily lives of cops on the trail of a team of identity thieves.
5. ***Pirate Latitudes***, by Michael Crichton (Harper: $27.99) A swashbuckling pirate and his crew attempt to commandeer a Spanish ship carrying a treasure of gold.
6. ***The Lacuna***, by Barbara Kingsolver (Harper: $26.99) A writer's escapades encompass 1930s Mexican artist communities and Cold War America.
7. ***The Lost Symbol***, by Dan Brown (Doubleday: $25.99) Harvard professor Robert Langdon uses his symbology skills to find a missing Freemason in Washington, D.C.
8. ***Wolf Hall***, by Hilary Mantel (Henry Holt: $27) The rise of Henry VIII's adviser Thomas Cromwell.
9. ***Eclipse***, by Stephenie Meyer (Little, Brown: $19.99) Bella must choose between her lover and a friend, between life and death.
10. ***I, Alex Cross***, by James Patterson (Little, Brown: $27.99) Detective Alex Cross infiltrates a secret society while tracking down the killer of a close relative.

Amy Winehouse charged in alleged theater assault

LONDON (AP)—Singer Amy Winehouse was charged Wednesday in connection with an assault at a theater, police said.

The 26-year-old soul diva was arrested after she presented herself at a police station with her lawyer, Thames Valley Police said in a statement.

She was charged with a public order offense and common assault under the name Amy Civil, following a Saturday incident at Milton Keynes Theater, police said. Winehouse was granted a divorce from her husband, Blake Fielder-Civil, in July.

She is free on bail and must appear in court on Jan. 20.

Police did not provide details on the incident, but British media have reported that the singer allegedly struggled with a member of the theater's staff after heckling at a performance.

Winehouse was acquitted earlier this year of assaulting a fan who asked to take her picture, after a judge said he could not be sure whether she lashed out at the woman deliberately. Prosecutors said Winehouse was drunk when she punched the woman in the eye, but the singer said she had merely acted to fend away an over-friendly fan.

AP

In this Feb. 20, 2008, file photo, Amy Winehouse performs at the Brit Awards 2008 in London. Winehouse, 26, has been charged by police in Milton Keynes, England, Wednesday Dec. 23, 2009, in connection with an assault at a theatre in the town on Dec.19.

Winehouse shot to international stardom with the Grammy-winning album "Back to Black" in 2006, but her music has been overshadowed by reports of drug use, run-ins with the law and a tempestuous marriage.

Steven Tyler in rehab for painkiller addiction

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Steven Tyler has entered a rehabilitation facility to treat an addiction to painkillers the Aerosmith frontman has taken to cope with 10 years of performance injuries.

Tyler said he's eager to return to work with his band mates.

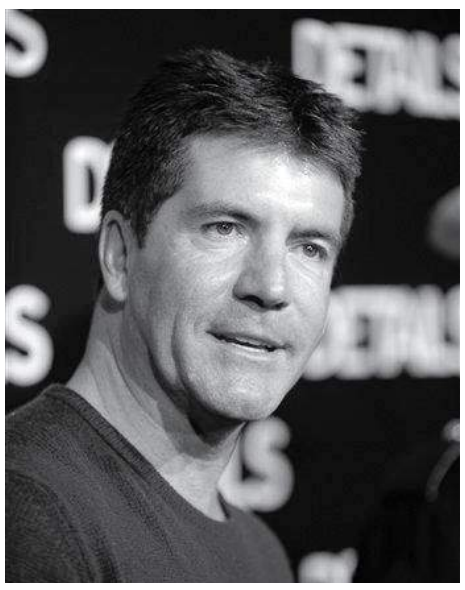
"I love Aerosmith; I love performing as the lead singer in Aerosmith. I am grateful for all of the support and love I am receiving and am committed to getting things taken care of," the 61-year-old rocker said in a statement released Tuesday.

The band canceled a summer tour in August after Tyler fell off the stage during a performance in South Dakota and broke his left shoulder.

Dr. Brian McKeon, who is treating Tyler, said in a statement that orthopedic injuries over the past decade have left the singer with severe chronic pain that will require surgeries on his knees and feet.

Tyler checked into rehab last year to recover from several foot surgeries and physical therapy. Tyler said the procedures were to correct longtime foot injuries resulting from his physical performances with Aerosmith.

Brother: Simon Cowell to leave 'Idol' next year



AP

In this March 20, 2008 file photo, Simon Cowell attends the Details magazine Party in Beverly Hills, Calif.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Simon Cowell's brother says the next season of "American Idol" will be the judge's last. Tony Cowell said in his weekly podcast, "The Cowell Factor," that a statement was being prepared that would certify that the acerbic British judge was leaving the popular Fox signing competition at the end of 2010.

Simon Cowell will concentrate on bringing his popular U.K. talent show "The X Factor" to the U.S. next year, his brother said on the Saturday podcast, which has since been removed.

"Meanwhile, Simon prepares for a new season of 'Idol,' or should I say, his last season of 'Idol,'" Cowell's older brother said. "A press statement is being prepared which will confirm what everybody expected: Simon will leave 'Idol' at the end of 2010 to concentrate on bringing the American version of 'X Factor' to U.S. TV in 2011."

The 50-year-old Cowell has been with "American Idol" since the series debuted in 2002. His contract ends after the upcoming ninth season, which begins Jan. 12. The judging panel was shaken up last year with the arrival of songwriter Kara DioGuardi and departure of pop star Paula Abdul, who is being replaced next season by talk show host Ellen DeGeneres.

A Fox spokeswoman had no comment about the report. Messages left for Cowell's spokesman were not immediately returned.

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins split after 23 years

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins have broken up. Publicist Teal Cannady said in a statement that the two actors separated over the summer after 23 years together. She did not elaborate. Sarandon, 63, and Robbins, 51, met while shooting the 1988 film "Bull Durham." They have two sons together. Sarandon stars in "The Lovely Bones," opening worldwide next month. Robbins last appeared in 2008's "City of Ember."

Atlanta rapper T.I. released from Arkansas prison

ATLANTA (AP)—Atlanta rapper T.I. has been released from a federal prison in Arkansas and is headed to a halfway house in Georgia. A lawyer for T.I. said the rapper was released Tuesday morning. T.I., whose real name is Clifford Harris Jr., last May began serving his sentence of a year and a day for illegal firearms possession and possessing a gun as a convicted felon. Steve Sadow said his client was expected to report to Dismas Charities halfway house in Atlanta on Tuesday night and will be there for up to three months. Sadow said Harris "did his very best to adjust to his circumstances" in prison and knew he had to pay for his crime. He said Harris was most looking forward to getting back to his family and being as productive as he can be.

Documentary on Jackson doctor planned

LOS ANGELES (AP)—When Michael Jackson's embattled personal physician returned to work last month, cameras were rolling. Miranda Sevcik, a spokeswoman for Dr. Conrad Murray, confirms that a British documentary crew chronicled his first day back at a Houston clinic for the poor. Murray returned to the clinic Nov. 23 and was greeted by several patients and his pastor. Murray remains under investigation for his role in Jackson's June 25 death. No charges have been filed, but investigators are looking into whether Murray improperly administered the pop superstar the powerful anesthetic propofol. Sevcik says Murray agreed to be filmed, but only if the footage didn't air until after all legal proceedings are complete. Details of the project were first reported by celebrity Web site TMZ.

NJ lawmakers ask MTV to cancel 'Jersey Shore'

TRENTON, N.J. (AP)—MTV is getting more pressure to cancel its "Jersey Shore" reality show. The latest criticism comes from the New Jersey Italian American Legislative Caucus, which says the show promotes derogatory ethnic stereotypes and is "wildly offensive." In a letter sent Tuesday to the president of Viacom, MTV's parent company, caucus chairman Joseph Vitale asks that the show be immediately taken off the air. The state lawmakers also have asked advertisers to boycott the show, which focuses on eight tanned 20-somethings and their escapades in Seaside Heights, a popular New Jersey beach town. On Wednesday, a Viacom spokesman referred a request for comment to an MTV spokesperson, who did not immediately respond. MTV has said its intention is not to stereotype or offend.

Get thee to a consignment shop with late mom's togs

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: Will you please advise me what to do with a lot of really gorgeous women's apparel? I'm talking about top-of-the-line shoes, handbags—everything you could imagine.

My mother left all of her things to me. I have already donated some to charity, but selling some would be nice, too. Any suggestions?

VANESSA IN AUSTIN

DEAR VANESSA: Check around to see if there are any consignment stores in your area that deal in high-end merchandise. I am sure they would be very interested in helping you sell the items. With the economy down, many women are on the prowl looking for the kinds of bargains you have described. You might also consider offering them on eBay.

DEAR ABBY: My cousin "Stacie" and I have sons who are the same age. The boys love playing together and spending the night at each other's house. The problem is that Stacie and her husband fight all the time. They scream and curse at each other at the top of their lungs, and they do it in front of the kids. Her husband also screams at their son, calling him "stupid" and other things that are not fit for a family newspaper.

My husband and I do not want our son exposed to that kind of behavior, but I don't know how to tell Stacie that this is why I can't allow my son to stay at her house anymore. Any suggestions?

STICKY WICKET IN TENNESSEE

DEAR STICKY WICKET: Yes. Host the sleepovers at your house. That way cousin Stacie and her husband can have more "private time" to continue their battles, and their poor son will have some relief from the emotional abuse he is suffering at the hands of both of them.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: A friend forwarded me an item she had read on the Internet. I have learned a lot during my 38 years of living, and think these important life lessons might be something you'd like to pass along to your many readers.

1. Respect others, even if they don't respect you. Later in life they may remember that respect.
2. Love with your whole heart. It may be broken, but you can't say that you never loved.
3. Treat animals with kindness, and it will be repaid to you a hundredfold.
4. Be honest with the people you love. Honesty really IS the best policy.
5. Admit your mistakes; it shows you are human.
6. Learn from your mistakes, but don't dwell on them. Negative thinking will only make you depressed—and that's not good for you or those around you.
7. Tell your family often that you love them. You never know when it will be the last time you get to say it.
8. Never tell others that their dreams are stupid or dumb. Each of us is entitled to our dreams. Who are we to say they won't come true?
9. Realize that the only person you can change is yourself.
10. Be thankful for everything you have. Knowing you are blessed isn't arrogant or cocky if you're truly thankful for your blessings.

JENNIFER IN COLORADO

DEAR JENNIFER: Thank you for sending this worthwhile item. I am sure my readers will agree that it has merit, take it to heart and refer to it when it's needed. I would only add that those people who respect themselves also tend to respect others; people who like themselves usually have more love to offer to others; and generosity of spirit, as well as material things, is what binds individuals and communities together.

To my Christian readers, I wish each and every one of you a very merry and meaningful Christmas.

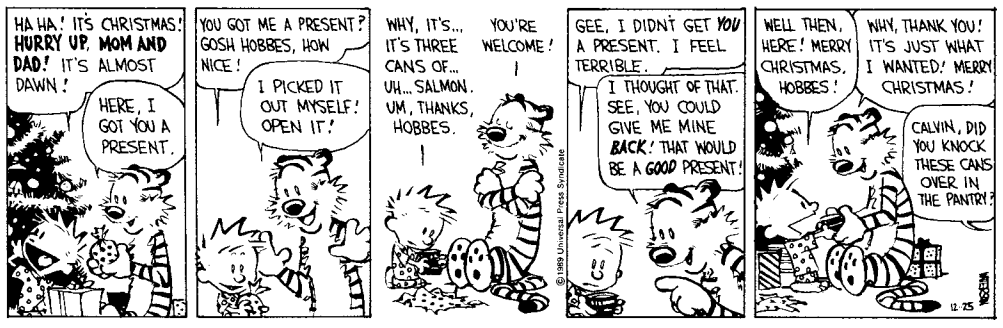
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby – Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HA HA! IT'S CHRISTMAS! HURRY UP, MOM AND DAD! IT'S ALMOST DAWN!
HERE, I GOT YOU A PRESENT.
YOU GOT ME A PRESENT? GOSH HOBBES, HOW NICE!
I PICKED IT OUT MYSELF! OPEN IT!
WHY, IT'S... IT'S THREE CANS OF... UH... SALMON. UM, THANKS, HOBBES.
YOU'RE WELCOME!
GEE, I DIDN'T GET YOU A PRESENT. I FEEL TERRIBLE.
I THOUGHT OF THAT. SEE, YOU COULD GIVE ME MINE BACK! THAT WOULD BE A GOOD PRESENT!
WELL THEN, HERE! MERRY CHRISTMAS, HOBBES!
WHY, THANK YOU! IT'S JUST WHAT I WANTED! MERRY CHRISTMAS!
CALVIN, DID YOU KNOCK THESE CANS OVER IN THE PANTRY?
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12-25

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

A NEW STETHOSCOPE! OH, JON!
IT'S ENGRAVED
"FROM MY HEART, TO YOUR EARS. LOVE, JON"
I GOTTA GIVE HIM THIS ONE
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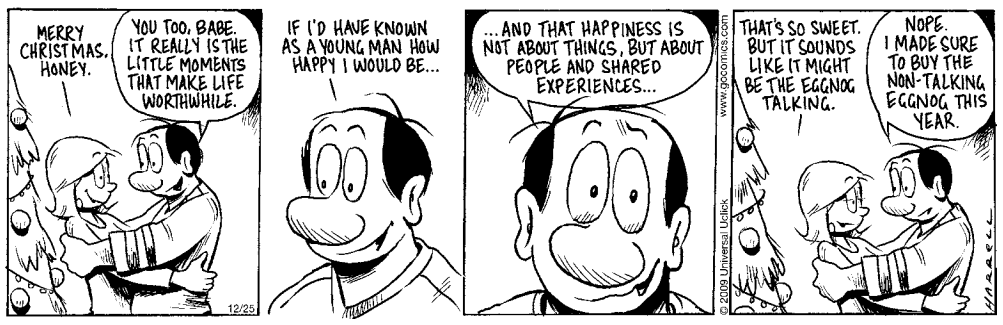
JIM DAVIS 12-25

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


MERRY CHRISTMAS, HONEY.
YOU TOO, BABE. IT REALLY IS THE LITTLE MOMENTS THAT MAKE LIFE WORTHWHILE.
12/25
IF I'D HAVE KNOWN AS A YOUNG MAN HOW HAPPY I WOULD BE...
...AND THAT HAPPINESS IS NOT ABOUT THINGS, BUT ABOUT PEOPLE AND SHARED EXPERIENCES...
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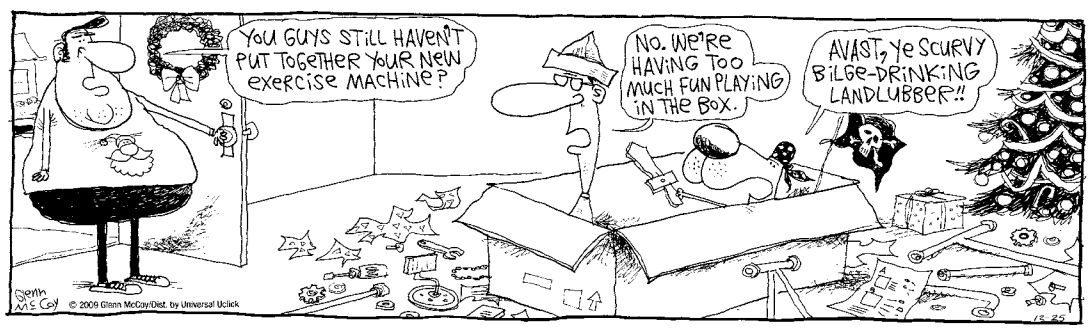
THAT'S SO SWEET. BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE IT MIGHT BE THE EGGNOG TALKING.
NOPE. I MADE SURE TO BUY THE NON-TALKING EGGNOG THIS YEAR.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


YOU GUYS STILL HAVEN'T PUT TOGETHER YOUR NEW exercise MACHINE?
No. WE'RE HAVING TOO MUCH FUN PLAYING IN THE BOX.
AVAST, Ye SCURVY BILGE-DRINKING LANDLUBBER!!
Glenn McCoy © 2009 Glenn McCoy/Dist. by Universal Uclick
12-25

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

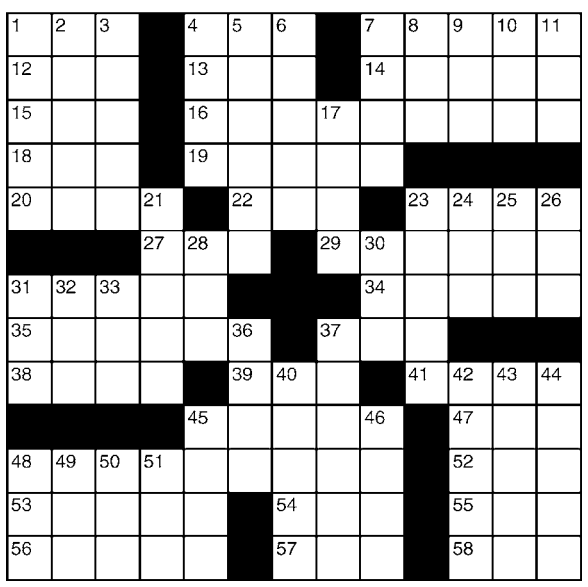
ACROSS
1 — -relief
4 Hot tub
7 Take to the ice
12 Flightless bird
13 Clump of 15-Across
14 One with an axe to grind?
15 Wrigley product
16 With 48-Across, Yuletide tag line
18 Can. neighbor
19 Underneath
20 Bottle feature
22 Writer Buscaglia
23 Prepared to drive
27 Owns
29 Too complex to solve
31 Sacrifice site
34 Quickly
35 Pall-bearers' burden
37 Afternoon social
38 Pith helmet
39 Discoverer's cry
41 Region
45 Wields needles
47 Crony
48 See 16-Across
52 Rd.
53 Duck
54 "Yo!"
55 Trail behind
56 Starbucks order
57 Gender
58 Crafty

DOWN
1 Started
2 Entertain
3 Poisonous plant
4 Clear the decks?
5 Juries
6 Confound
7 Presentation
8 Mauna —
9 Piercing tool
10 Aviv preceder
11 Mound stat
17 Snatched
21 Uniform color
23 November birthstone
24 H, to Hellenes
25 List-ending abbr.
26 Batik need
28 Exist
30 Scot's refusal
31 Performance
32 "The 7 Faces of Dr. —"
33 Recipe meas.
36 Writer Morrison
37 "Hail —, blithe spirit"
40 Boom periods
42 Milky gems
43 Fleet-related
44 Plaintive poem
45 Elbow counterpart
46 Charon's river
48 Solidify
49 Eventual aves
50 Feedbag tidbit
51 Banned insecticide

Solution time: 25 mins.

F	B	I	■	S	H	A	G	■	F	L	A	K
D	U	N	■	E	U	R	O	■	R	O	P	E
A	S	S	I	S	T	E	D	■	O	B	E	Y
■	■	I	D	A	■	S	L	Y	N	E	S	S
B	O	S	O	M	Y	■	Y	E	T	■	■	■
A	R	T	■	E	E	L	■	N	A	D	I	R
A	G	E	D	■	W	I	N	■	L	E	V	I
L	Y	D	I	A	■	P	O	D	■	S	A	P
■	■	■	V	I	M	■	D	I	V	I	N	E
R	E	M	O	D	E	L	■	G	A	S	■	■
O	V	E	R	■	R	E	S	I	S	T	E	D
M	I	S	C	■	G	A	I	T	■	E	R	R
E	L	S	E	■	E	F	T	S	■	D	A	Y

Yesterday's answer 12-25



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Klea Scott, 41; Annie Lennox, 55; Sissy Spacek, 60; Barbara Mandrell, 61

Happy Birthday: Not a lot will get past you as you face obstacles and deal with them one at a time. Your ability to strategize will enable you to stay ahead of the competition. Take enough time to rejuvenate and regroup so you can avoid costly mistakes. Smart moves and precise timing will be your guide to better days. Your numbers are 3, 14, 19, 21, 25, 32, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Take pride in what you do and refuse to let anyone rain on your parade. You have to keep your emotions out of the equation, regardless of the comments or reactions of others. Put negativity aside and focus on the positive. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): You'll be pleasantly surprised by what someone does or says. Getting together with the people you love will help you realize how much you have. A little romance is in order. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You can help a worthy cause without letting it break your budget. Offer your time and assistance instead of your cash. Someone you need to take care of will cost you emotionally, physically and financially if you aren't well organized. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Folding under pressure will not help your cause. Take a different approach and you can push your way past anyone who is standing in your way. Don't feel obligated to take on someone else's burden. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): What you don't know won't hurt you. You have enough to contend with already, so don't feel guilty when you should be enjoying a little time with the ones you love. Don't take on everyone else's troubles. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You've been very generous and the appreciation you receive will make it well worth your while. The social events you attend will lead to interesting talks that will play into your plans for the future. Youngsters and elders in the family will add to your joy. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You will face opposition, emotional turmoil and controversy. Try not to say too much to anyone who may be looking to pick a fight. If something in your life really isn't working, consider alternatives. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Turn a blind eye to what aggravating people are doing. Instead, spend more time interacting with the people who inspire and support your ideas and goals. Overindulgence will not be the answer if you are disgruntled about someone's actions. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Your dedication, loyalty and hard work will raise your profile and bring you into the center of the events that unfold. Plan to do a little traveling about if it will help someone who can't get around that easily. ✪✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Settle down—not everyone will share your enthusiasm. Talking about your accomplishments will humiliate someone who has been working hard and getting nowhere. Be gracious and handle your friends and relatives with kindness. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Don't feel pressured to make a decision that will alter your personal life. Take your time and discuss your dilemma with someone who has always given you good advice. Rely on family and friends to come through for you now. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Someone will try to take advantage of your generosity and good will if you aren't careful. Don't worry if someone gives you an ultimatum. It's time to take a pass and go your separate ways. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are quick to react, hard-working, loyal and devoted. You stand up for your beliefs and are generous and gracious.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1					8			6
		2		9		3		
	8				3		7	
3		6						
	1						4	
						7		8
	5		4				3	
		9		5		2		
8			6					1

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/25

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

5	9	1	6	8	3	4	2	7
4	8	2	7	9	5	6	1	3
3	7	6	4	2	1	5	8	9
6	2	4	5	3	7	8	9	1
7	1	8	9	6	2	3	5	4
9	5	3	8	1	4	7	6	2
2	4	7	1	5	6	9	3	8
1	6	9	3	7	8	2	4	5
8	3	5	2	4	9	1	7	6

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/24

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON **Solution: 10 letters**

M	T	Y	H	Q	E	D	M	O	N	T	O	N	A	S
N	O	P	R	O	U	H	T	E	B	A	Z	I	L	E
N	O	S	Y	O	P	E	S	L	D	K	C	L	T	H
J	O	D	A	R	L	E	E	S	E	I	P	O	A	C
S	U	S	N	I	C	G	R	N	T	P	E	A	R	R
R	E	B	L	O	C	A	S	M	N	H	A	V	U	A
E	S	T	I	E	L	I	T	O	A	C	G	H	A	L
P	E	D	A	L	N	R	T	S	H	J	Y	I	C	L
P	L	C	I	G	E	G	T	U	I	R	E	V	N	S
I	A	P	T	Y	N	E	R	D	E	N	I	S	T	K
H	W	O	A	I	P	C	(D)	L	I	S	A	O	T	K
S	N	R	L	N	H	T	L	(A)	I	A	N	G	H	Y
R	P	L	E	I	O	A	W	O	(E)	E	N	E	R	C
O	E	Y	L	N	G	R	N	N	O	(R)	T	A	P	O
W	I	L	L	E	S	D	E	N	A	T	S	N	U	D

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Altar, Arches, Chapel, Choir, Churchill, Crypt, Diana, Diocese, Dunstan, Edmonton, Elizabeth, Gallery, Gates, Glory, Hope, Jubilee, Kensington, Knights, London, Majesty, Medieval, Mosaic, Nelson, Organist, Patron, Paul, Pillars, Prayer, Queen, Read, Stepney, Stone, Vision, Wales, Wellington, Willesden, Worshippers, Wren

Yesterday's Answer: Testamur

NEW FROM WONDERWORD! The Wonderword 2010 Desk Calendar is now available for pre-order on Amazon.com and Calendars.com. Search: "Wonderword Calendar." Order yours today!

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Contact Julie at 287-6542 to schedule an appointment.

WHATZIT Solution: Anton Chekhov

JOE HILL, Esq.,
HILL LAW OFFICES
P.O. Box 500917, Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 234-6806 / 7743
Fax: (670) 234-7753

Attorney for Petitioner

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

LI CHUN CHEN, Petioner,
Versus
XI HE BI, Respondent.

FCD DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 09-0695

SUMMONS

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Petition for Divorce which is given you herewith, within thirty (30) days after service of this Summons upon you.

YOUR ANSWER SHOULD BE IN WRITING and filed with the Clerk of Court, Guma' Hustisia, Iimwal Aweewe, House of Justice, P.O. Box 500307, Saipan, MP 96950 and served upon petitioner's counsel, Atty. Joe Hill, P.O. Box 500917, Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to file an answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Petition for Divorce.

By order of the above Court:

Dated this 10th day of December, 2009.

/s/ Deputy Clerk of Court
Superior Court

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Telephone No. 235-7553

pro se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In Re The Matter Of The Petition To Appoint General Guardianship For:
ISARINA H. CEASAR and RINA H. CEASAR, Minor Children,
By:
BERTINA LIMUK, Petitioner.

FCD GU Civil Action No. 09-0720

NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on December 30, 2009, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 205, before Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 23rd day of December, 2009.

/s/ Bernadita Sablan
Clerk of Court

Saipan Tribune
Sports
Angamwas rules 4-person
Tribune
FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2009
Fitial eyes Cepeda's re-appointment to NMC board.
DPH to ask for extension of emergency declaration.
$1.35M earmarks for NMI now up for Obama's
Fitial: Ombudsman shouldn't accommodate 'overstayers'
10 DAYS to go before Christmas
Immigration FORUM

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CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

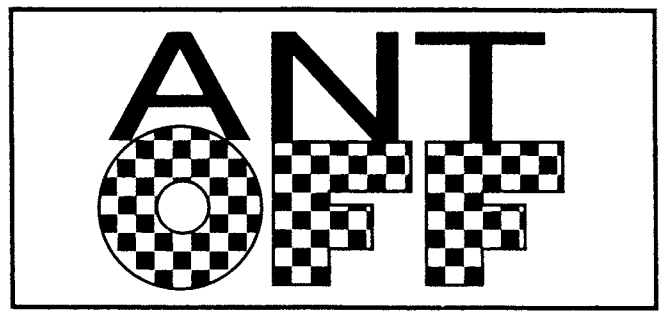
Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



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Find today's solution in this section

J.R. Smith's 41 points lead Denver past Atlanta

DENVER (AP)—J.R. Smith came off the bench to score a season-high 41 points, hitting 10 3-pointers, and the Denver Nuggets beat the Atlanta Hawks 124-104 Wednesday night.

Carmelo Anthony added 24 points and rookie Ty Lawson, starting in place of the injured Chauncey Billups (groin), had 16, helping Denver win its sixth in a row at home.

The victory was the first for Denver this season while missing an injured starter. The Nuggets entered 0-5 with Billups missing two of the losses and Kenyon Martin three.

Jamal Crawford scored 24 points and Al Horford scored 18 points and had 11 rebounds for Atlanta, which lost for only the second time in its past nine games.

Leading by 12 at the half, Denver had its lead cut to 63-57 when Atlanta opened the third quarter with a 6-0 run.

Arron Afflalo responded with a 3-pointer as part of a 12-3 run capped by Anthony's three-point play that put the Nuggets back in front 75-60 with 7:19 remaining.

Going into the final period, the Nuggets led 92-82. Atlanta managed to hang around until the Nuggets went on an 18-7 run that included four 3-pointers by Smith, the last an off-balance fadeaway from 26 feet that brought the crowd to its feet and put Denver ahead 118-97 with 3:42 left.

Smith misfired on his final three shots from beyond the arc, leaving the game with little more than a minute remaining one 3-pointer shy of tying the franchise mark of 11 3-pointers in a game that he set April 13 against Sacramento, when he also scored a career-high 45 points.

Denver led 34-24 at the end of the first quarter, and the Nuggets stretched their lead to 16 points with an 8-2 burst highlighted by successive 3-pointers by Smith. But the Hawks had a surge of their own, pulling to within seven when Josh Smith converted a fast-break dunk and Joe Johnson hit a jumper.

But Denver scored the next six points, starting with a dunk by Nene off a feed from Anthony Carter, en route to a 63-51 halftime lead.

Magic 102, Rockets 97

In Orlando, Florida, Orlando retained its lead in the Southeast Division with a comfortable win over Houston.

Dwight Howard had 20 rebounds and 13 points, outmuscling a Rockets team lacking size and strength in the middle.

Jameer Nelson added 15 points in his first start for five weeks, helping the Magic win for the fifth time in six games ahead of a big Christmas Day match against the Boston Celtics.

Carl Landry had 20 points for the Rockets.

Cavaliers 117, Kings 104, OT

In Sacramento, California, Cleveland held Sacramento scoreless in overtime to pick up a hard-fought win.

LeBron James had 34 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists. He had 26 points in the first half but it was his defense in the final quarter and overtime that proved the difference, as the Kings missed all seven shots and turned the ball over twice in the extra period.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas hit three 3-pointers in the extra session and finished with 25 points as the Cavaliers beat the Kings for the seventh straight time.

Tyreke Evans finished with 28 points for the Kings, but made only one of eight shots in the fourth and overtime when manned by James.

Trail Blazers 98, Spurs 94

In San Antonio, Jerryd Bayless scored a career-high 31 points in his first start for injured All-Star Brandon Roy, leading hobbled Portland over San Antonio.

Portland played without Roy and center Joel Przybilla, but still posted a third straight win.

Tim Duncan had 24 points for the Spurs, who are 2-10 against teams with winning records this season.

Thunder 117, Suns 113

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 38 points, including a key jumper from behind the key with 14 seconds left, as Oklahoma City ended its nine-game losing streak to Phoenix.

Durant, who scored 11 points in the fourth quarter, gave Oklahoma City a 115-111 lead with his final field goal.

Russell Westbrook added 19 points for the Thunder.

Amare Stoudemire had a season-high 35 points and 14 rebounds for the Suns.

Heat 80, Jazz 70

In Miami, the hosts won in a game where both sides had their lowest points total of the season.

Dwyane Wade scored 29 points and Udonis Haslem added 12 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat, who improved to 11-1 against Utah since the start of the 2004-05 season.

Deron Williams scored 18 points for the Jazz, who outshot Miami by a slim margin. But the Jazz had 21 turnovers, which Miami turned into 28 points.

Utah is 0-5 when scoring under 90 points this season.

Raptors 94, Pistons 64

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Toronto held undermanned Detroit to its equal lowest score in franchise history.

Andrea Bargnani scored 21 points, while Hedo Turkoglu added 11 points and a season-best 11 assists.

Detroit has lost six straight and were without Ben Gordon (ankle), Richard Hamilton (hamstring) and Tayshaun Prince (back). Charlie Villanueva went 0 of 7 from the field trying to play through a foot injury.

The Pistons, who shot 28 percent from the field, had twice before been held to 64 points.

AP

Denver Nuggets guard J.R. Smith hangs from the rim after dunking as Atlanta Hawks center Zaza Pachulia, of Georgia, looks on in the third quarter of the Nuggets' 124-104 victory in an NBA basketball game in Denver on Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2009.

Wizards 109, Bucks 97

In Milwaukee, Antawn Jamison had 25 points and 10 rebounds in Washington's win over Milwaukee.

Earl Boykins scored 12 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter for the Wizards.

Michael Redd scored a season-high 32 points for the Bucks, who scored the first nine points of the fourth quarter, taking an 84-81 lead, before the Wizards responded with a 9-0 run.

Hornets 108, Warriors 102

In New Orleans, Golden State slumped to its seventh straight loss, beaten by New Orleans.

Chris Paul scored 20 points and Emeka Okafor had 10 points and 14 rebounds for New Orleans, which trailed late in the third quarter before surging ahead for good with a 13-2 run.

Monta Ellis scored 35 for the Warriors, who used only seven players because of injuries.

Timberwolves 103, Nets 99

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Minnesota got a favorable video review in the final minute, helping it beat New Jersey in a meeting of the NBA's worst teams.

Al Jefferson scored a season-high 27 points and Jonny Flynn added 22 points for Minnesota, which sent the Nets to their eighth straight loss.

The key moment came with 26 seconds left when the officials reversed a ruling that said the ball went out of bounds off the leg of Wolves' Corey Brewer. Brewer was fouled on the ensuing inbound play and hit two free throws to give Minnesota a 101-97 lead.

Devin Harris led New Jersey with 23 points.

Lakers lock up Gasol with three-year extension

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. (AP)—Pau Gasol knows he surprised nobody by agreeing to a three-year contract extension with the Los Angeles Lakers nearly two seasons before it kicks in.

After a rough start to his NBA career in Memphis, the Spanish 7-footer had been vocal about his desire to stick with the defending champions well into the future. And after nearly two years in Hollywood as Kobe Bryant's best supporting player, Gasol thinks Bryant will follow his lead this time.

"It gives me tremendous peace of mind and safety and confidence," Gasol said Wednesday at the Lakers' training complex. "We have a tremendous team, and we all want the same thing. We want to be the best team out there. It's a great thing as a player to be a part of something this special."

Gasol's deal extends through the 2013-14 season, and could be worth more than $60 million depending on future salary caps.

Gasol has been to two NBA finals since joining the Lakers on Feb. 1, 2008, in a trade with the Grizzlies that propelled Los Angeles back into the league's elite. His impact on the Lakers has been undeniable: The club is an astonishing 101-23 in regular-season games with Gasol in the lineup, and Bryant anointed Gasol as basketball's best big man after Tuesday night's win over Oklahoma City.

"With the way we play, with the players we have on our team, I can't imagine a big man who would be better to play for this team than Pau," Lakers general manager Mitch Kupchak said.

A superb rebounder, a solid low-post defender and a dependable No. 2 scoring option alongside Bryant, Gasol earned an All-Star berth and averaged 18.9 points and 9.6 rebounds last season as Los Angeles won its 15th NBA title. His numbers are nearly the same this season despite missing the first 11 games with an injured right hamstring.

Los Angeles is 15-1 since Gasol's return. The Lakers host the Cleveland Cavaliers on Christmas Day.

Gasol is making $16.5 million this season and $17.8 million next year. His new deal likely will pay him around $20 million per season, but that might be less than what Gasol could have made as a free agent.

A few extra millions meant little to Gasol, who led Spain to the most recent FIBA world championship and the European title, winning tournament MVP honors both times. After starting his NBA career as a reluctant franchise player in Memphis, he much prefers the cool California lifestyle in a cosmopolitan city more like his native Barcelona.

"I think I've matured a lot since I came here, and the quality of everything is just a bit higher [than in Memphis]," Gasol said.

Gasol feels the Lakers have a remarkable team chemistry, with no jealousy or anger over playing time or scoring chances. Young center Andrew Bynum is signed through 2012 with a club option for the following season, while Gasol, Lamar Odom and Ron Artest all agreed to extensions or new contracts in the last few months to be supporting players to Bryant, the NBA's second-leading scorer with 29.3 points per game.

Gasol said he believes Bryant intends to finalize his own extension soon, keeping together the Lakers' championship core for several more years. Although Bryant hasn't formally inked a three-year extension likely worth over $80 million, he declined the chance to opt out of his current contract this summer, flatly saying he wouldn't leave the Lakers.

"We continue to have dialogue with Kobe and his representative," Kupchak said. "I do anticipate continued discussions, but that's really all I can say. I've always felt ... that Kobe should and would end his career in Los Angeles."

With owner Jerry Buss willing to spend beyond the limits of the salary cap, Kupchak believes he can keep together the entire core of the NBA's most valuable and profitable franchise, according to Forbes magazine. Kupchak even believes the Lakers can keep 10-time NBA champion coach Phil Jackson, who has given confusing signals in recent weeks about whether he sees a long-term future with the club.

"If he sees growth and a future with this team, he'll come back," Kupchak said. "Cutting a deal is the easy part. It's about his health, and what he's achieved."

Blood remains issue for Pacquiao-Mayweather

By TIM DAHLBERG
AP BOXING WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Manny Pacquiao has always been willing to spill blood to win a fight. He's not nearly as eager to give blood to get a fight.

The fate of Pacquiao's planned March 13 megafight with Floyd Mayweather Jr. hangs in the balance. Both sides traded jabs Wednesday over Mayweather's insistence that the two submit to Olympic-style drug testing amid indications that both were open to a possible compromise.

With time running short, though, Pacquiao's promoter said he's not willing to negotiate much longer to make the fight.

"I think it's over tomorrow and we're going to another opponent if there is no agreement," promoter Bob Arum said. "It looks to me like they want a way out of the fight. Mayweather doesn't want to take a chance of losing."

A day after Mayweather's camp threatened to scuttle the fight unless the boxers were subject to random blood tests, Arum said his fighter would agree to just three blood tests. One would be done in January during the week the fight is formally announced, a second would be done no later than 30 days before the fight, and a final test would be done in the locker room afterward.

Arum also said the tests should be done by companies used by major sports leagues, like Major League Baseball and the NFL, something that so far is a major sticking point in the talks. Mayweather's camp wants the tests done by the United States Anti-Doping Agency, which operates under much stricter rules that include random blood tests.

Arum accused Mayweather of trying to play mind games with Pacquiao, saying that the Filipino sensation has never failed urine tests for performance-enhancing substances.

"They want to put it in Manny's head that they can come in any time and take blood," Arum said. "Manny believes taking blood will weaken him. This is absolutely outrageous. Who does Floyd Mayweather think he is, the commissioner of boxing?"

Mayweather's promoter, Richard Schaefer, said he was willing to try and reach a consensus between the two sides. He cited comments by Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, that Pacquiao would agree to blood tests up to five days before the fight as possible middle ground.

"If we could agree to a 3-day cutoff I would try to sell that to my side," Schaefer said. "If Arum wants to walk away then he is going to be the one responsible for this fight falling apart."

Roach told The Associated Press on Tuesday night that he would not allow Pacquiao to be tested the day before the fight, but would agree to giving blood if there was a cutoff date.

"If they give me a 5-day window or something like that I have no problem with it," Roach said. "When they've drawn blood from Manny in the past he feels weaker for three or four days. It may be mental, but it's there."

The standoff over drug testing is the only issue still in the way of a fight that could be the richest ever. The two fighters earlier agreed to take equal purses, and earlier this week Mayweather's camp agreed to pay Pacquiao $10 million for each pound or fraction of a pound if the fighter does not make the 147-pound welterweight limit.

If the fight is held, it will be at the MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas. But with the magnitude of the fight's promotion and the need for the fighters to set up training schedules, there isn't a lot of time left to reach an agreement.

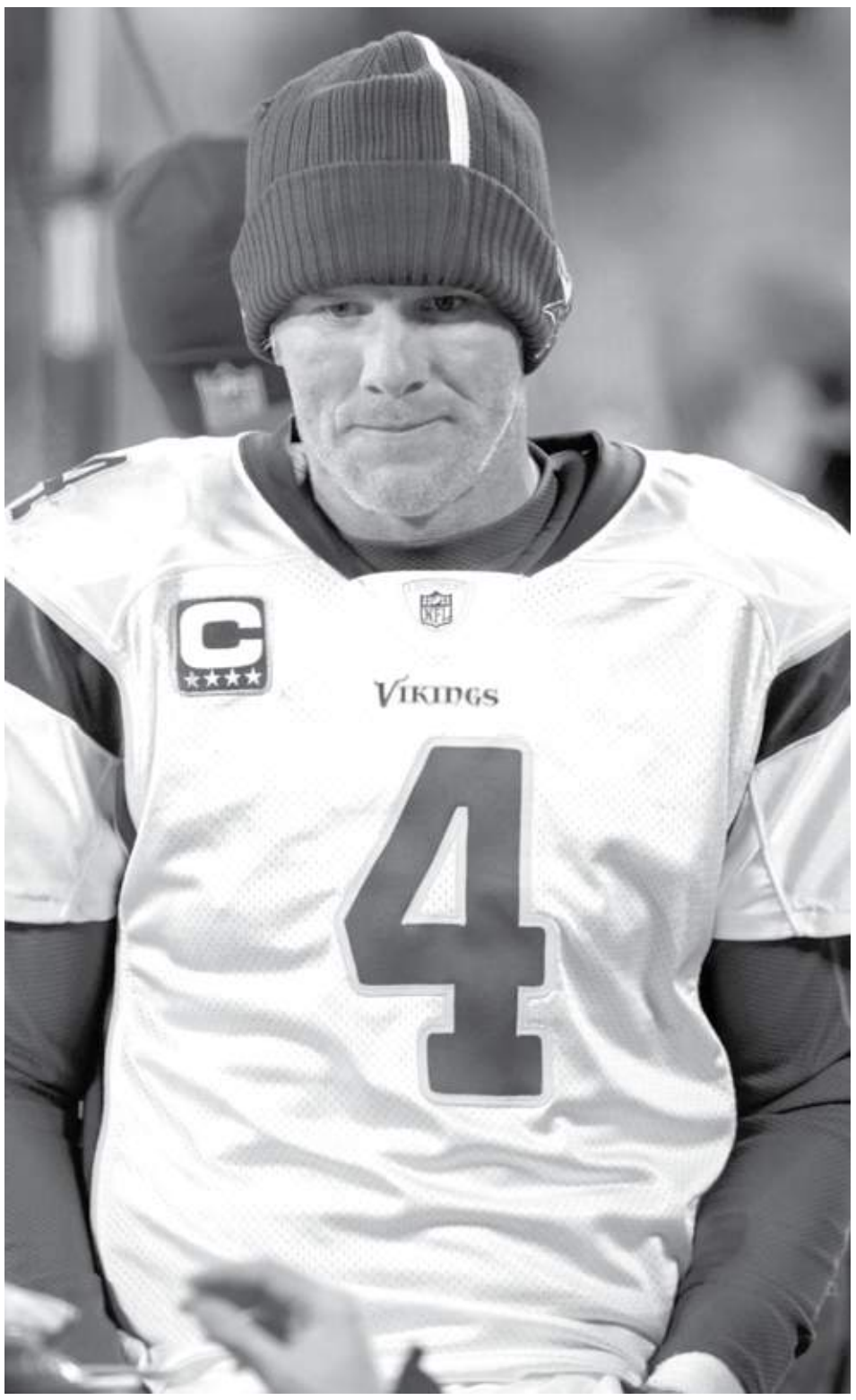
The demand by Mayweather for the USADA to administer an Olympic-style testing program for the two fighters beginning with the contract signing goes far beyond any testing done by the Nevada Athletic Commission. Boxers have their urine tested before and after fights and occasionally in training, but there are no blood tests for things like human growth hormone that can't be detected in urine.

Schaefer, who with former boxer Oscar De La Hoya runs Golden Boy Promotions, said that if Mayweather was trying to get out of the fight he would have walked when Pacquiao's camp demanded the $10 million weight clause in the contract. He said he didn't think 8 to 12 urine tests and 3 to 5 blood tests before a fight was unreasonable.

"Manny Pacquiao probably thinks it's going to be some nurse with a big needle sucking out a gallon of blood and leaving him lying on the floor for a week," Schaefer said.

Nothing could be further from the truth, said USADA executive director Travis Tygart, who promised that any testing his agency did would not affect the outcome of the fight.

"What we do and have been doing in no way impacts any athlete's ability to compete," Tygart said.



AP

In this Dec. 20, 2009, file photo, Minnesota Vikings' Brett Favre (4) looks on on the sidelines during the second half of an NFL game against the Carolina Panthers.

Favre says his spat with Childress now 'resolved'

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP)—Brad Childress and Brett Favre talked twice this week about moving forward from their animated disagreement on the Minnesota sideline last week over the coach's suggestion his grizzled quarterback should come out of the game.

Conflict over?

That's what they insisted on Wednesday, blaming the high-profile nature of national television and one of the most famous players in football history for what they declared a blown-out-of proportion issue.

"I think it's all resolved, first of all," Favre said, adding: "The fact that we've lost two of the last three—the frustration is going to show. It should."

The Vikings (11-3) are trying to get back on track before the playoffs, but the Favre-led offense has found trouble for the first time this season. Minnesota has lost two of the last three games, and Favre has thrown for only three touchdowns with four interceptions this month.

The offense clearly needed a spark against the Panthers last Sunday night, and Childress was justifiably concerned for Favre's health while taking several hard hits from Julius Peppers and a fierce defense.

However, the mere consideration of benching the three-time NFL MVP—who's a candidate this year for a fourth—with the Vikings taking a 7-6 lead into the fourth quarter struck most observers as strange.

Asked in Chicago about the Childress-Favre confrontation, quarterback Jay Cutler smiled while expressing doubt coach Lovie Smith would try to do the same if the Bears were winning a tight game.

"I don't think Lovie would do that," Cutler said.

The report by ESPN, citing unnamed sources, that Childress and Favre have clashed over the in-game authority for calling the plays, provided some unsubstantiated evidence for the tension. It also cast doubt about their chemistry, but both of them attempted to downplay any lingering dissension.

"I think the team as well as the coaching staff knows where I stand and what I stand for, as I do them," Favre said. "We're trying to do this thing together."

The coach offered as much.

"I feel like I have a good relationship with him," Childress said. "I don't think anything has really changed. Have we learned each other since September or August? I'm sure we have."

As for whether Favre resented Childress grabbing his arm during the exchange in Carolina, he used a little gallows humor.

"I was probably more resentful of Julius touching me several times. Those seemed to hurt a little," Favre said, insisting he was more concerned about overreacting with so many people—including his daughters—watching on TV.

Since taking over in 2006, Childress has pushed for a disciplined approach from his quarterbacks. Veterans Brad Johnson and Gus Frerotte each expressed frustration afterward with his rigid coaching and unwillingness to listen to their lobbying.

With his experience in the West Coast system, his status as the NFL's all-time leading passer, and his close relationship with offensive coordinator Darrell Bevell, Favre has undoubtedly enjoyed more impact on the game plans and freedom to inject his voice than other Vikings quarterbacks of the past three years.

In reading between their lines, though, it appears Childress and Favre have some natural differences of interpretation on the level of latitude the quarterback should have at the line of scrimmage to orchestrate the offense.

"He sees a lot. He looks at tape. He knows what it means. He looks at indicators. I've talked to you guys about him spending time at it," Childress said. "Now I'd be lying to you if I told you he spends more time than we do. But he spends a lot of time at it."

They both tried to steer away from their dispute, with Childress praising Favre for being "extremely true" to the offense and Favre claiming he considers himself a coachable player.

"Anyone that's ever played the game, we all think we know it all at some point," Favre said. "And I know that's not the case. I know our offense starts with Adrian Peterson and that's where it ends, and we have to get that back on track."

Childress denied ever ordering Favre out of a game. He also insisted the quarterback is "fully armed" when it comes to being able to switch a play from a run to a pass or vice versa.

Asked how he'd handle this if he were a coach, Favre rambled for a few minutes before bringing up his friendship with former coach Mike Holmgren and describing Holmgren's willingness to listen to his suggestions once he was "three or four years into it" and had earned his trust. Favre spoke at length of his appreciation of Bevell, too.

Favre did, however, acknowledge he doesn't know how a coach would handle bringing in "an old-timer like myself."

Coincidentally, Favre was voted by his teammates as the most valuable offensive player, as Childress revealed Wednesday.

Allen won the defensive award and kicker Ryan Longwell was honored on special teams.

Injured linebacker E.J. Henderson, who badly broke his left leg earlier this month, was chosen as Minnesota's winner of the Ed Block Courage Award, given to a player on each team who exemplifies commitment to sportsmanship and courage.

26 CNMI junior netters to compete in Guam

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth's junior tennis players are heading to Guam this weekend for the 2009 Guam Junior Open Championships to be played at the Ninete Tennis Centre in Hagatna from Dec. 27 to 30.

CNMI coach Jeff Race is bringing 26 players to Guam to compete in the boys' and girls' 10-and-under, 12-and-under, 14-and-under, and 18-and-under singles and doubles divisions.

The CNMI Team is composed of Tammy Ackerman, Amy Arenovski, Jeane Bracken, Chirs Cajigan, Tommy Choi, Ilia Corella, Benjie Decena, Carl Dela Cruz, Jodel Fernandez, Adele Hudkins, Angelo, Emily, Rafael, and Michael Jones, Jake Lee, Mikayla Lopez, Clay McCullough-Stearns, Christian Miller, Theecel Minor, Andy and Nathan Lucas, Gabrielle Race, Colin and Quintin Ramsey, and Negahr Rastguiy.

"I think this will be our biggest delegation so far in years. We may even outnumber Guam players," said Race, who will leave Saipan with the CNMI players tomorrow.

Last year, the CNMI sent only 12 players to Guam. They were Corella, Cody and Gabrielle Race, Cajigan, Fernandez, John Cano, Tammy and Dylan Ackerman, Rastguiy, Arenovski, and Kennedy Isuka.

Race is hoping for the best possible performance from the CNMI junior players and believes competing in off-island tournaments, like the four-day event on Guam will help improve the skills of the Commonwealth's bets.

"This kind of tournament is good for the development of our young players, especially those who are used to competing only in tennis events on Saipan. In Guam, they get to experience what it is like to play against Guam players, who have different styles than the players they use to meet on Saipan," Race said.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Benjie Decena, seen here returning to Peter Loyola during the Inaugural Tan Holdings Tennis Classic last month, will join the CNMI Team that will compete in Guam this weekend.

Of the more than 20 Saipan players, it is Rafael Jones who is expected to deliver for the CNMI Team. He is fresh from a stint in New Zealand, where he competed in three tournaments. Jones was in Hamilton, Gisborne, and Auckland for almost a month battling Australia, New Zealand, and fellow Pacific Oceania players in the boys' 14-and-under and 16-and-under competitions.

SIXERS

From Page 32

bauliman's crosscourt inbound pass to Nate Mateo and the former streaked to their frontcourt, but was blocked by Rabauliman. Rabauliman saved the ball from the baseline, passed it to Mateo, who then passed it to J.R. Concepcion. Concepcion drew a foul from Novo Pepito and trooped to the foul line, but missed both free throws. Concepcion made up for his earlier booboo when the G-Stars grabbed the offensive board and he canned a banked shot off a baseline drop pass from Clayton Kenty to tie the game again, 52-all.

Ernest Duenas muffed his own pair of charities in the ensuing play and the Sixers had two offensive rebounds with Benavente clinching the last one, but eventually lost the leather to the baseline.

With 17.6 seconds left, Kenty inbounded the ball, but his pass to Nate Mateo was deflected by Chris Duenas, who completed the steal, drove to the baseline, but decided to feed Ada in the paint. Ada got the ball, faked off two G-Stars players, and drew a foul.

Ada drilled his first charity, but missed the second one. Fortunately, Pepito, who filled-in for the sick Matt Duenas, was there for the offensive rebound and the putback, giving the Sixers a 55-52 lead, with 14 seconds remaining in the game.

The G-Stars refused to give up when Mateo drove to the basket, made his acrobatic shot and drew a foul from Ian Benavente, cutting the Sixers' lead to one, 54-55. Mateo muffed the game-tying bonus free throw, but notched the offensive rebound and G-Stars retained possession when a jump-ball was called between Rabauliman and Ada.

Mateo tried to attack the Sixers' defense anew. However this time he was unsuccessful, as the Sixers held their ground and Mateo lost the ball to the baseline on his way to a layup, with 0.8 seconds left in the game, giving Ray Duenas' wards a Christmas present two days in advance.

When the final buzzer sounded, the Sixers celebrated their championship win, which came after more than an hour of waiting for the title match to start. G-Stars and Sixers players were at the Ada gym as early as 5pm, knowing the match was scheduled to start at 5:30pm.

However, the game began at 6:30, as referee Gabriel White explained there was another miscommunication between league coordinator Ponce Rasa and the referees group. White insisted referees in charge for the title match were informed the game will begin at 6:30pm, but only a few hours before the kick-off, they were told there will be no third place game, moving the finals earlier. White said they had to stick with the first schedule, leaving the Sixers and G-Stars warming-up for the title game for more than one hour.

When the match started, the Sixers were a bit cold, while the G-Stars found their rhythm and led by as much as 14 points, 24-10, midway in the first half. However, the G-Stars could not hang on to the lead, as they scored only a free throw in the remaining half of the first half, allowing the Sixers to tie the game at the break, 25-all.

Ada opened the second half with a pair of free throws to give the Sixers their first taste of the lead, 27-25, before the G-Stars answered with an 11-0 run to regain the upper-hand, 36-27, going into the final nine minutes of the game.

However, the Sixers made another comeback, with Ada anchoring the team's offense and his supporting crew doing the rest, playing tough defense and going for rebounds and loose balls. Ada scored 11 straight markers at one point in the second half and 16 of the Sixers' 30 points in the last 20 minutes of the match.

Sixers 55 – Ada 25, Pepito 13, E. Duenas 9, Benavente 4, Flores 2.

G-Stars 54 – Rabauliman 15, N. Mateo 16, Concepcion 11, D. Mateo 4, Kenty 2.

Scoring by halves: 25-25, 55-54.

ADA

From Page 32

break, 25-all. Ada put the Sixers on top for the first time when he nailed two charities at the start of the second half and when the G-Stars threatened to pull away, he canned jumpers and made daredevil drives to lift the team to a come-from-behind win.

Besides the Finals MVP plum, Ada also claimed the scoring champion trophy averaging close to 20 markers per game. Ada's consistent offensive performance in the regular season helped the Sixers finish second in the team standings with their 10-1 record.

The G-Stars swept the regular season of the 12-team league behind Rabauliman. The former CNMI Men's and Junior National member averaged in double figures for the G-Stars, leading his team to a clean 11-0 mark in the single-round elimination.

In the finals, Rabauliman tallied 16 markers, but fell short of handing the G-Star a title win, as he and two other teammates muffed crucial free throws.

Rabauliman and Ada received their trophies from Rep. Ed Salas during the awards ceremony after the Sixers-G-Stars title game. The Sixers went home with the championship trophy, while the G-Stars claimed the pennant and runner-up trophies. The third place trophy went to the Chalan Kanoa Saints via a point-system. The Sainst lost in the semis to the Sixers by only a deuce, while 670 Rollers II had a seven-point loss to the G-Stars in the other semis pairing.

DOCOMO

From Page 32

Favor switched at halftime, 44-35, when Lizama and Mateo drew help from their teammates in outgunning Docomo, 29-16, in the second period.

Docomo recovered in the third quarter behind Bernardo's 11 points and Estolas' nine before a tear-drop shot from Mateo in the last 13 seconds of that canto help Hyatt keep a precarious one-point lead, 63-62, entering the payoff period.

It was a seesaw battle in the first five minutes of the fourth quarter before Docomo's big men took charge in the closing minutes to earn the right to challenge IT&E for the second and last finals seat.

Docomo 89 – Bernardo 26, Estolas 22, Fitial 17, Villacrusis 14, Teregeyo 6, Abuel 4.

Hyatt 83 – Mateo 26, Lizama 18, Libuw 15, Aquino 12, Yamamoto 4, Gabaldon 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-15, 35-44, 62-63, 89-83.

MERRY

From Page 32

Mustering up all my courage, I yell, "What do you want?"

"Another year of eligibility for Tim Tebow," he answers.

My fear vanishes. I agree. Now curious, I ask, "Are you Nick?"

The elderly man replies, "Yes, actually it's Nicholas. But most people call me Santa."

I'm more shocked than Elin Nordegren. Santa Claus is standing in my living room!

"What are you doing here?" I wonder aloud.

"Well, once a year I go to everyone's house to deliver presents and …"

I stop him, "Okay, I know that story. So, huh, what did you bring me?"

"Nothing."

"What? How come?" I ask almost indignant.

"Looking around I see you have everything you want."

"Well, yeah, I guess that's true. But can I have a better planet?"

More sure and calm than Derek Jeter, Santa says, "My boss, call him Master G, has made the world so wonderful that there are more people living today than in any time in history and people are living longer than ever. Plus you have the ability to be as happy as you want to be. What's so bad about that?"

My hangover was coming back like Randy Couture. "Hmm, alright. Can I do something for you?"

"You could do me a favor," suggests St. Nick with a wink of his eye and twist of his head. "Wish everyone in the Northern Marianas Merry Christmas."

"Consider it done," I tell him.

With that he left. I look out the window and see him get into a sled with a Lakers bumper sticker.

I roll back to bed.

My wife sleepily asks, "Who were you talking to, honey?"

"Santa Claus" I reply honestly.

"Go back to sleep."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	22	5	.815	–
Toronto	14	17	.452	10
New York	11	17	.393	11 1/2
Philadelphia	7	21	.250	15 1/2
New Jersey	2	27	.069	21

Southeast Division

Orlando	22	7	.759	–
Atlanta	20	8	.714	1 1/2
Miami	14	12	.538	6 1/2
Charlotte	11	16	.407	10
Washington	10	17	.370	11

Central Division

Cleveland	22	8	.733	–
Milwaukee	12	15	.444	8 1/2
Detroit	11	18	.379	10 1/2
Chicago	10	17	.370	10 1/2
Indiana	9	18	.333	11 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	20	9	.690	–
Houston	17	12	.586	3
San Antonio	15	11	.577	3 1/2
New Orleans	13	14	.481	6
Memphis	13	15	.464	6 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	20	9	.690	–
Portland	19	12	.613	2
Utah	16	13	.552	4
Oklahoma City	14	14	.500	5 1/2
Minnesota	6	24	.200	14 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	23	4	.852	–
Phoenix	18	11	.621	6
Sacramento	13	15	.464	10 1/2
L.A. Clippers	12	16	.429	11 1/2
Golden State	7	21	.250	16 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Orlando 102, Houston 87
Toronto 94, Detroit 64
Miami 80, Utah 70
Minnesota 103, New Jersey 99
Washington 109, Milwaukee 97
New Orleans 108, Golden State 102
Portland 98, San Antonio 94
Denver 124, Atlanta 104
Oklahoma City 117, Phoenix 113
Cleveland 117, Sacramento 104, OT

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Anthony, DEN	28	292	247	855	30.5
Bryant, LAL	26	281	163	750	28.8
James, CLE	29	287	209	831	28.7
Durant, OKC	26	237	200	707	27.2
Wade, MIA	25	226	193	666	26.6
Nowitzki, DAL	27	251	183	705	26.1
Ellis, GOL	26	252	122	641	24.7
Bosh, TOR	30	246	216	714	23.8
Roy, POR	29	226	151	643	22.2
Arenas, WAS	25	189	126	551	22.0
Johnson, ATL	26	218	87	560	21.5
Gay, MEM	26	204	111	539	20.7
Jennings, MIL	26	193	84	524	20.2
Evans, SAC	26	192	126	523	20.1
Boozer, UTA	28	222	109	553	19.8
Stoudemire, PHX	28	210	133	553	19.8
Duncan, SAN	23	183	88	454	19.7
Stuckey, DET	27	195	136	532	19.7
Iguodala, PHL	27	185	122	530	19.6

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
Perkins, BOS	125	194	.644
Howard, ORL	161	255	.631
Gasol, MEM	147	239	.615
Millsap, UTA	126	214	.589
Bynum, LAL	155	267	.581
Horford, ATL	145	250	.580
Hilario, DEN	144	249	.578
Landry, HOU	154	270	.570
Garnett, BOS	165	293	.563
Lee, NYK	198	352	.563

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, ORL	28	106	255	361	12.9
Wallace, CHA	25	57	245	302	12.1
Noah, CHI	26	107	202	309	11.9
Camby, LAC	27	81	228	309	11.4
Bosh, TOR	30	102	232	334	11.1
Boozer, UTA	28	57	244	301	10.8
Randolph, MEM	27	124	166	290	10.7
Haywood, WAS	25	109	159	268	10.7
Duncan, SAN	23	72	169	241	10.5
Lee, NYK	27	62	215	277	10.3

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, PHX	28	318	11.4
Paul, NOR	18	200	11.1
Williams, UTA	26	266	10.2
Rondo, BOS	26	252	9.7
Kidd, DAL	28	259	9.3
James, CLE	29	225	7.8
B. Davis, LAC	27	202	7.5
Arenas, WAS	25	174	7.0
Westbrook, OKC	26	172	6.6
Duhon, NYK	27	173	6.4

By The Associated Press

2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Sixers' Joe Ada barrels through the defense of the G-Stars' Marvin Rabauliman.

The G-Stars' Raymark Castro goes for a layup against a Rollers I defender.

Young 670 Rollers' Lawrence Deleon Guerrero pulls up for a jumper against Ol'Aces Nathan Chargualaf.

Kagman Sparks and Celtics player battle for the rebound during their game in the regular season of the 2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

A Hi-5 player drives against two Young 670 Rollers defenders.

Three Young 670 Rollers defenders gang up on Ol'Aces' Wes Tomokane.

Young 670 Rollers' Joe Norita, left, beats Rollers I's Heartim Williams for the rebound.

The Saints' Leo Galarse looks for a teammate to kick the ball out to.

Celtics and Saints players fight for the rebound.

Hi-5's Ariel Urbano goes for a layup against Young 670 Rollers' Chris Camacho.

J.R. Smith's 41 points lead Denver past Atlanta

J.R. Smith came off the bench to score a season-high 41 points, hitting 10 3-pointers, and the Denver Nuggets beat the Atlanta Hawks 124-104 Wednesday night. 28

Saipan Tribune
Sports

26 CNMI junior netters to compete in Guam

The Commonwealth's junior tennis players are heading to Guam this weekend for the 2009 Guam Junior Open Championships to be played at the Ninete Tennis Centre in Hagatna from Dec. 27 to 30. 30

Sixers celebrate Christmas with title win

Ada, Rabauliman named MVPs

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Sixers' Joe Ada and the G-Stars Marvin Rabauliman received advance Christmas gifts when they went home with MVP trophies after a brief awards ceremony for the 2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League on Wednesday at Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Ada claimed the Finals MVP, while Rabauliman was named regular season MVP.

Ada scored 25 points in the Sixers' 55-54 title win over the G-Stars on Wednesday, leading his team's recovery from a 14-point deficit in the first half. The Marianas High School student started slow, making only a field goal in the opening half of the first 20 minutes of the match.

He picked up his pace midway in the first half, as he and teammates Ernest Duenas and Novo Pepito helped the Sixers tie the game at the

See ADA on Page 30

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Finals MVP Joe Ada goes for a reverse layup against Saints defenders during their semis game in the Rotary caging on Monday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

It's a merry Christmas indeed for San Antonio Sixers, who pulled off a thrilling 55-54 title win over the G-Stars in the 2009 Saipan Rotary Club Youth Basketball League on Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

A few defensive stops in the end resulting in the one-point victory were all the Sixers needed to end the G-Stars' winning run in the 18-and-under caging. The G-Stars swept the regular season of the 12-team caging to take the pennant, but failed to shine in the all-important game after going 0-for-4 from the foul line in the homestretch.

Marvin Rabauliman made the first miss from the 15-foot line, failing to complete his three-point play, which could have given the G-Stars a 51-50 lead. Instead, Joe Ada put the Sixers back in the lead with his running basket, 52-50, with 1:01 left on the clock.

Ian Benavente then intercepted Ra-

See SIXERS on Page 30

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The Sixers pose with their championship trophy after beating the G-Stars in the finals of the Rotary caging on Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. Joining them in the awards ceremony is Rep. Ed Salas, left.

Docomo ousts Hyatt

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

NTT Docomo moved a win away from clinching the second finals berth after outclassing Hyatt Regency Saipan, 89-83, in their playoff game in the 2009 IT&E Inter Government/Business Basketball League on Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Docomo will face corporate rival IT&E on Monday for the right to duel Department of Community and Cultural Affairs in the finals on Dec. 30. Hyatt was eliminated and had to settle for its pennant championship after failing to keep pace with Docomo in the remaining 3:35 of the do-or-die game.

Hyatt was behind by only three, 74-77, when Docomo launched a short 8-4 run to make it an 87-78 spread with 1:32 left on the clock. Kevin Fitial had six points in that run as he and fellow big man Kae Bernardo dominated the paint against Hyatt's much smaller frontliners.

Ray Lizama missed a layup on Hyatt's next offensive set and in frustration committed an unsportsmanlike foul against Bernardo. Bernardo split his charities and that was it for Hyatt, as Docomo increased its lead to double digits, 88-78, with less than a minute left in the match.

Bernardo top-scored for Docomo with 26 points, while Jun Estolas added 22. Fitial and James Villacrusis also finished in double figures, nailing 17 and 14 markers, respectively.

Nate Mateo paced Hyatt with 26 markers, while Lizama chipped in 18. Gino Libuw and Bernard Aquino contributed 15 and 12, respectively, but were non-factors in the crucial fourth period, leaving only Mateo and Lizama to carry the load for Hyatt.

Only Mateo and Libuw scored more than a field goal for Hyatt in the first period, which ended with Docomo ahead by four, 19-15.

See DOCOMO on Page 30

NTT Docomo's Kae Bernardo, left, eludes the defense of Hyatt Regency Saipan's Nate Mateo during their playoff game in the government/business caging on Wednesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Merry man

Suspicious sounds from the living room wakes me before I am ready. The LED clock says it was 2:37 in the morning. I believe the dang thing.

My brain pounds my skull from too much alcohol the night before. Had no good reason not to drink on Christmas Eve. Well, except for a nasty hangover.

I feel like Joe Frazier suckered punched me and then it dawns on me: it's Christmas morning and lots of presents are under our Christmas tree! Another faint but distinct sound alarms me into action. I roll out of bed and grab my Louisville Slugger.

Creeping to the door like a ninja assassin, I open it just enough to peek thru and see someone standing it my living room. It's not Brett Favre.

The man is quite plump with a white beard, wearing a red and white costume. I assume he's an Arizona Cardinal fan.

He looks like a chubby Nick Buoniconti, the former pro linebacker. He's rummaging around but doesn't appear to be taking anything.

See CHRISTMAS on Page 30

OFF THE BENCH

By BOB COLDEEN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Coldeen is a longtime journalist in the CNMI and is currently the news director of KSPN2